

# Socialist Review

**Aotearoa/New Zealand**

For a socialist and democratic alternative

Issue 10 Autumn 2002 \$2



## Resisting Bush's wars

No more Afghanistsans!

## Fighting for real change

Argentina in revolt



war abroad • war on civil liberties • war against refugees • uprising in argentina • jo freeman

## In this issue...

- |    |   |    |   |
|----|---|----|---|
| 3  | Editorial   | 16 | Troubled times at the degree factory                      |
| 5  | Behind Bush's "Evil Axis"                           | 18 | Australia's refugee scandal                               |
| 6  | Labour and the Alliance's attack on civil liberties | 22 | The Greens – the new radicals?                            |
| 8  | Bush's war at home                                  | 25 | The state comes back                                      |
| 10 | Argentina in revolt                                 | 27 | United we stand?  |
| 12 | Saying no to the WEF                                | 29 | Jo Freeman on "The tyranny of 'structurelessness'"        |
| 13 | Sweatshop struggles                                 | 35 | Inside the system / Letters                               |
| 14 | The rich get richer (surprise, surprise)            | 36 | Red Words: R.A.K. Mason, Meaghan Delahunt...              |
| 15 | Nurses fight for health                             | 38 | Meeting details, subscription information, where we stand |

## Help us keep the alternative media running!

This is the tenth issue of *Socialist Review* and we're now managing to put out the magazine on a regular quarterly basis. We're committed to bringing our readers stories and analysis about events here and overseas that you simply won't get from the corporate media.

But to do this we need your help.

Our magazine has lived a hand-to-mouth existence over the last few years, being produced on some very old computer equipment that urgently needs replacing.

So at the moment we're fundraising to buy computer equipment that will ensure *Socialist Review's* continued publication.

If you'd like to help, please send donations to "SR Donations", P O Box 11207, Wellington, and make cheques out to "ISO." Donations over \$20 will receive a free copy of the next issue

**Regards,  
Editorial Committee**

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# Wars abroad, wars at home

Our last issue filled most of its pages addressing the war against Afghanistan. Since then, the US government has gained a speedy victory in the first phase of its ongoing war. But the orgy of celebration disguised underlying problems that have already begun to emerge.

The period we have entered over the past months is one of volatility and instability – economically, politically, and militarily. Not only is the US economy mired in recession, but the world economy faces recession for the first time since the mid 1970s.

Bush's skewed spending priorities, pushed post-September 11, have only exacerbated the growing bitterness over the economic inequality that characterises US society.

The Enron scandal is already revealing the way in which the intersection of politics and economics can potentially undermine the presidency.

Moreover, the economic collapse and revolt in Argentina bring once again to the fore the bankruptcy of the corporate globalisers' agenda.

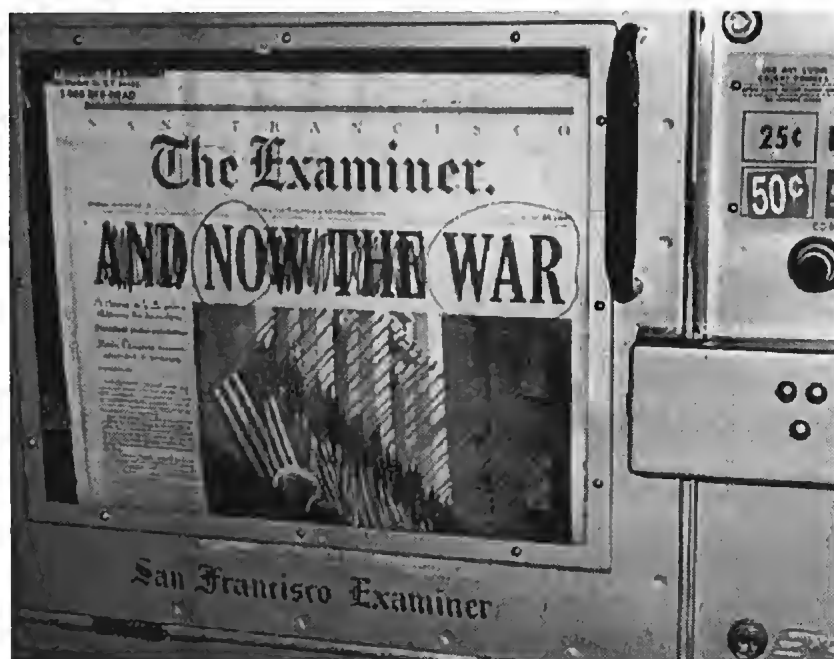
With this issue of *Socialist Review*, we continue to examine the consequences of the new US "war on terrorism" at home and abroad – the attempt to use the war on terror as the rationale to buttress and further US interests. We also take up questions within the antiwar movement that we believe must be

addressed to make it more effective in taking on the warmongers.

## Revolt

We cover the crisis in Argentina, with Tony Hartin looking at the background to Argentina's revolt.

Already there are signs of revival in the movement against corporate globalisation. The interaction between the economic crisis and the war is making it crucial for activists to develop an understanding of the connection between US economic and military domination. This will help the movement find its legs again.



## The war abroad

The victory in Afghanistan was both military and ideological. Within the space of two months, the US dragooned most of the world's governments into its "coalition against terrorism," routed the Taleban government, smashed much of the al-Qaeda apparatus, and installed a friendly government in Afghanistan. It won a military victory with US firepower and an ideological victory with scenes of Afghans celebrating the Taliban's defeat.

As the war winds down into a "mop up" operation, the US may face problems in shaping the situation

completely to its will. But it will take away a clear sense of victory, with massive popular support behind it. A belligerent US ruling class now believes it can reorder the world to do America's bidding. Conservative columnist Charles Krauthammer urged Bush and Co. along:

The psychology in the region is now one of fear and deep respect for American power. Now is the time to use it to deter, defeat, or destroy the other regimes in the area that are host to radical Islamic terrorism.

Hence Stage Two. No, not Iraq yet. It surely is the worst terrorist threat, but because it is the worst and the most difficult, it will require more planning, and more political and military preparation. Now is the time to go for the low-hanging fruit: giving the Philippines assistance in crushing their own al-Qaeda guerrillas. Telling the thugs running Sudan, Syria, Libya and Yemen to cease and desist, to shut down the training camps, to cough up the terrorists – "or else," as the president so delicately puts it.

And then on to Iraq.

## Devastation

As the propagandists of the Right get dizzy with success, it's worth considering what the B-52s left behind in Afghanistan. A country that was already devastated is even more so. The government that Washington installed parallels almost to the person the government of warlords, thugs, and drug dealers that ran the country before the Taliban took over in 1996.

US bombs almost certainly killed more Afghan civilians than the numbers who died in the September 11 attacks, according to a careful analysis by University of New Hampshire professor Marc Herold. Hundreds of thousands remain on the verge of starvation. After laying waste to Afghanistan, the economic aid promised by the US and the "international community" has slowed to a trickle. "The response so far is absolutely scandalous," a diplomat in Kabul told the *Financial Times*. "It is discouraging people and

its is worrying what is going to occur in terms of the international response."

If the US was short on resources for the Afghan government, perhaps it was because it devoted them to continued bombing and to building half a dozen military bases inside the country. The US ignored repeated calls from the Afghan government to halt the bombing – which only goes to show who really calls the shots in Afghanistan.

From its bases in Afghanistan and its newly established footholds in the Central Asian states, the US has achieved geopolitical aims that it has sought for a decade. Now that the US has what it wants in the region, the talk about "feeding starving Afghans," "liberating Afghan women," "capturing bin Laden," and "taking back their country from the Taliban" can be forgotten.

## Licence to attack

Beyond the borders of Afghanistan, Bush's "war on terrorism" has given licence to regimes around the world to attack internal oppositions under the guise of "fighting terrorism." For example, Russia continues its scorched earth campaign against Chechen rebels with the West's blessing. But even in countries that haven't the remotest connection to Islamic fundamentalism, governments have used Bush's war to attack their foes.

In Bolivia, the government charged trade union leader Oscar Olivera and several of his comrades with "sedition, conspiracy, incitement to public disturbance, and criminal association." Olivera is no more a terrorist than Martin Luther King was. His big crime was having led a mass movement in 2000 that defeated government plans to privatise the country's water.

In Colombia, the Pastrana government is using the war on terrorism to step up its war against the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, and the Bush

administration is discussing how to increase its support for counterinsurgency operations there.

The most serious developments to emerge from the Pandora's box Bush opened have taken place in Palestine and South Asia. Declaring Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat "our bin Laden," Israel's war criminal, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, has stepped up Israel's campaign of assassinations, bombardments, and house demolitions against Palestinians. The US has given Israel the green light.

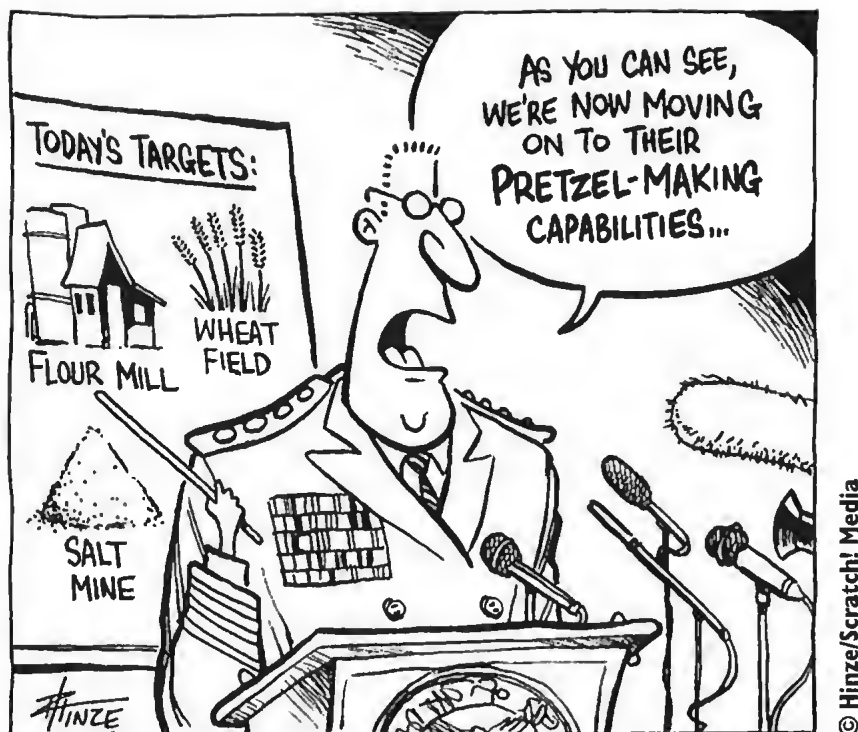
## "With us or against us"

But the US is alarmed at the prospect of a war between India and Pakistan, which India characterises as a response to Islamic terrorism. Following a December 13 attack on India's parliament, India declared war on Pakistani "terror."

Reading from the US script, India accused – without offering a shred of proof – Pakistan-backed militant groups of sponsoring the attack. It mobilised nearly one million troops to its border with Pakistan. Indian defence officials casually discussed plans to use tactical nuclear weapons. All of this was certainly more than the US bargained for when Bush warned the world's governments that they were either "with us, or with the terrorists."

This is the world that Bush's "war on terrorism has left behind." Instead of making the world more secure, this war has already spawned more war and destruction. Instead of addressing the poverty that leaves billions hungry and desperate, the US sends bombers. As the US moves on in search of "low-hanging fruit," it will leave more destruction in its wake. ■

# Behind Bush's talk of an "evil axis"



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As George W. Bush was gearing the world up for war last spring, he and his media acolytes talked about seeking "justice" for the victims of the September 11 attacks. But justice was the last thing on Bush's mind. Instead, Bush was wrapping himself in the tragedy of September 11 to advance US geopolitical interests.

## State of the union speech

Those who believe that Bush's "war on terror" has anything to do with justice should review the president's January 29 State of the Union address. In one of the most warmongering speeches a US president has ever given, Bush told the world that it had better get in line or face the US war machine.

He didn't mention Osama bin Laden, who he had wanted "dead or alive" only a few months before. He barely mentioned the al-Qaeda network. Instead, he conjured up an "axis of evil," composed of Iraq, Iran and North Korea, that the Pentagon had to be prepared to fight. The

idea that these countries could pose a threat to the US is ludicrous. The US spends more on its military than the gross national products of these countries combined. But this isn't the first time US policymakers have turned these three countries into a rationale for further Pentagon waste.

## Justifying military budget

A decade ago, after the USSR collapsed, Pentagon chiefs had to figure out a way to justify maintaining a military budget at near-Cold War levels after the rationale for a Cold War-sized military had disappeared. The answer was to propose that the US military be prepared to fight two simultaneous "major theatre wars" on either side of the world against "rogue nations," namely, Iraq, Iran and North Korea.

Months before September 11, the Pentagon abandoned the "two war" doctrine, making clear, however, that the US "is not abandoning planning for two conflicts to plan for fewer than two... The [Depart-

ment of Defence] is changing the concept altogether by planning for victory across the spectrum of possible conflict." So Bush's "axis of evil" and "war on terrorism" rhetoric merely supplies the latest high-flown justification for the military's plan for permanent war – a plan in the works long before September 11.

## Attack Iraq

Almost from the day it arrived in office, the Bush administration has schemed for ways to attack Iraq. In his January 29 speech, Bush began to build a case for just such an attack. Knowing that Americans don't like the idea of going to war to defend oil profits, Bush put the case in the standard "good vs. evil" framework: "This is a regime that has already used poison gas to murder thousands of its own citizens – leaving the bodies of mothers huddled over their dead children."

Bush was correct. The Iraqi government killed more than 5,000 Kurds in a poison gas attack in 1988. Only the US didn't really protest at the time. Saddam Hussein was then Washington's ally against another part of the "axis of evil," Iran. In fact, officials of the Reagan and Bush Sr. administrations did their best to cover up the slaughter so they could get back to the business of selling Saddam components to build weapons of mass destruction.

Four months before Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990, a delegation of US senators, acting with personal authorisation of the then President George Bush, met with Saddam to assure him of US support.

In 1992, congressional investigators were closing in on Bush Sr.'s "Saddamgate." Bush's failure to win reelection rendered these investigations moot. But there is still plenty of evidence that makes a mockery of the Bush gang's claim to be fighting "evil" in Iraq.

Perhaps that's one reason why Dubya wants to make it next to impossible for the public to obtain records from the Bush Sr. and Reagan administrations. As Dubya might say, "This is a regime that has something to hide from the civilised world." ■

**Lance Selfa**



There have only been two "terrorist" attacks in New Zealand in the past 50 years. One was carried out by the secret service of a supposedly friendly state

(France), the other the still unsolved 1984 Wellington Trades Hall bombing is widely suspected to have been the work of a right-wing nut. Surely New Zealand must be one of the "safest" countries in the world? (The Taliban, as we pointed out in our last issue, don't even know where this country is!)

The Labour/Alliance coalition have lost no time in using the US "War on Terror" as an excuse to attack democratic rights and beef up state powers at home whilst cosyng up to the US regime. In a series of government press releases in late January it was revealed that over the next three years \$29 million worth of funding for "anti-terrorist" activities is to be given to eight different government agencies. Over \$11 million of this is to go to agencies dedicated to internal spying – the Security Intelligence Services (SIS) and GCSB.

### Illegal surveillance

It has been well documented in the past that the SIS has carried out illegal surveillance and spying activities against protest and activist groups in New Zealand. The very same government that can't find the money to fund the claims of nurses and teachers is now somehow "discovering" \$29 million to give to the SIS, the racist cops, customs and others! This is still more proof for workers, students, women, Māori and all of us who are exploited by this rotten system that we can't put our faith in parliament and Labour and the Alliance. In the end their commitments are the same as National's: to spy on and attack democratic dissent in Aotearoa and to stay in the US's good books.

Jim Anderton made this point explicitly in a recent press release: "the Labour/Alliance coalition is planning some changes to legislation to... provide more flexibility in sharing information with overseas law enforcement agencies". The CIA, one of America's most notorious "law enforcement agencies" has a long and bloody record of illegally involving itself in the suppression of dissident groups in South America, as well as funding and training right wing death squads for dictatorships like that of Pinochet in Chile.

### "Terrorists"

For decades Nelson Mandela and the ANC were denounced as "terrorists" by the same people. In 1981 members of Muldoon's National Government described the anti-Spring-

bok tour movement as "terrorist". Far from being in a position to lead a "war on terror", the United States is probably the worst terrorist state the modern world has known, as even a brief look at its history of assassinations, wars and support for bloodthirsty dictators would show. And yet Anderton and Clark seem all too keen to change the law to keep New Zealand on-side! A "war on terror" means a war on the democratic rights of Aotearoa's workers.

This war on democratic rights at home has already begun. At the first meeting of the Anti-Imperialist Coalition – a coalition of groups who oppose New Zealand's support for the US "war on terror" – two uniformed cops visited the meeting, wanting to find out about the coalition's members and planned activities. In early November the Pathfinder Press bookshop in Christchurch received phone calls and a visit from Christchurch Central Police Station's Paul O'Neill to convey "concern" about the "anti-American character" of the bookshop's window display.

## The war at home: Labour and the Alliance's attack on civil liberties

By Dougal McNeill

The shop's display included anti-war and anti-imperialist slogans as well as an anti-war editorial. The cop timed his visit to coincide with a forum about New Zealand's role in the war being held at the bookstore. In Wellington early this year a man, Tahir Ali, was visited by the cops after writing a letter to *The Evening Post* suggesting that the SAS be disbanded because it was a waste of taxpayers' money. The detective who spoke to Mr Ali told him that the police routinely investigated people who expressed opinions against the government. After they came under widespread criticism, the police claimed that they had investigated Mr Ali because he had an "Arab sounding name" (he is in fact a Fijian Indian who has lived in this country since he was an infant).

### Erode freedoms

None of these three blatant attacks on free speech were in response to formal complaints. Anyway, since when has writing

a letter to the editor been a crime? Instead, they are part of a concerted effort on the part of the government and the cops to challenge and erode our democratic freedoms. The "war on terror" has provided the perfect opportunity for Labour and the Alliance to try and strengthen the power of the ruling class. The Terrorism Suppression Bill was already before parliament early last year.

needs an body like the cops to keep up the rule of the rich. And, even if they wanted to, Labour and the Alliance are in no position to challenge the world ruling class decision to launch an imperialist offensive – as George W. Bush himself made clear, governments are either with America or against it.

Again, Rosa Luxemburg anticipated

ing, distributing dissenting pamphlets and leaflets and organising.

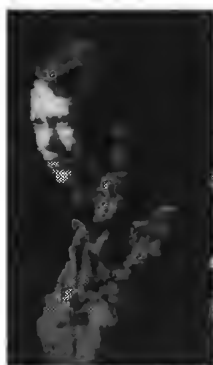
We need to organise in the unions to show to our workmates how attacks on democratic rights are attacks on workers' rights. Because, if we don't take on the Labour/Alliance government and fight against their attacks on democracy then we will give the ruling class the



September 11 and its aftermath has given the government the confidence to go that bit further.

All of these events highlight a difference between revolutionaries like those of us in the International Socialist Organisation and those reformist parties – like the Greens and the Alliance – who see parliament as the "democratic" way for workers to win change. The state and parliament are not institutions that can be reformed or relied on to be neutral bodies in struggles between workers and their rulers. They are organs of class power – the power of the ruling class over the rest of us.

As the great German revolutionary Rosa Luxemburg put it, "what parliamentarism expresses... is capitalist society, that is to say, a society in which capitalist interests predominate. In this society, the representative institutions, democratic in form, are in content the instruments of the interests of the ruling class". Those police who try and intimidate dissenting groups are not just examples of "bad cops", although we should certainly protest their actions: they represent the logic of a system that



much of this: "as soon as democracy shows the tendency to negate its class character and become transformed into an instrument of the real interests of the population, the democratic forms are sacrificed by the bourgeoisie and by its state representatives". The focus by the cops on anti-war activists and socialists is just a small taste of what we can expect from the ruling class in the form of attacks on workers if this conflict escalates.

### Logic of the system

This is why slogans like "Justice Not Revenge" and calls for an international tribunal are misguided and doomed to failure. The Coalition's attacks on democratic rights are not some sort of aberration, they are part of the logic of this undemocratic system. We cannot rely on those who at the moment attack civil liberties to bring neutral "justice". To begin the movement against this war and to protect our freedoms we need to use them – to get out in the streets protest-

*Rogue's gallery: (Left) Then... Phil Goff and Helen Clark protest the Vietnam War 30 years ago (Below) Now... Phil Goff has a little chat with anti-war protesters outside Labour's annual conference*



confidence to increase their assault. The history of this country proves how far they are prepared to go – check out the article on the 1951 lockout (when censors controlled all press) in Issue 7 of this magazine if you want proof.

### New Cold War?

There is nothing George W. and his obedient allies in Wellington would like more than a new Cold War with "terrorism" standing in for "communism." But those who pessimistically assume this to be inevitable ignore the vastly different situation now than 50 years ago. Today there is enormous bitterness at two decades of declining living standards and attacks on social services. Ordinary people's trust in governments and institutions is far weaker than it was then.

We know the nightmare scenario the Bush gang wants to repeat. We need to organise to make sure they can't do it again. ■

While Bush's war in Afghanistan appeared to be winding down, his war at home was only just beginning. The extent to which President George W. Bush and Attorney General John Ashcroft have shredded constitutional protections is breathtaking. Creating military tribunals for so-called terrorism suspects with the stroke of his pen, Bush appointed himself judge, jury, and executioner to potentially anyone in the world who is not a US citizen. Shortly thereafter, Ashcroft announced plans to lift restric-



tions on FBI and CIA spying on domestic political and religious organisations.

### "Anti-American Material"

In a hurry to use its new powers, the FBI has already "visited" such national security threats as a Houston art museum accused of displaying "anti-American material"; a young activist in Raleigh, North Carolina, who had a satirical poster of Bush on her college dorm wall; and a retired phone company worker who criticised Bush at his San Francisco gym. But more serious crackdowns on dissent are sure to follow.

Before a cowering Senate Judiciary Committee in December, Ashcroft offered no apologies. Instead, in his best imitation of Joe McCarthy yet, he proclaimed that anyone who criticises his methods is "giving aid and comfort" to terrorists.

Despite all of these repressive measures, the government has little to show for its crusade. Of the hundreds of Arab men held virtually incommunicado for months, only a

# Bush's war on civil rights

handful have been charged with any crime more serious than some violation of immigration laws. By January, the government had announced a new roundup of 6,000 visa holders it wanted to deport.

### Anthrax

At the same time, the Bush administration seemed unable to find the perpetrators of the most serious terrorist attack after September 11 – the anthrax mailings that killed five people. This may be a case of government incompetence, but it's more likely a case of selective investigation. When the anthrax attacks were panicking the country in October, a parade of so-called terrorism experts filled editorial pages and television screens with assertions that the attacks had the fingerprints of al-Qaeda or Iraq. Even Bush said that he "wouldn't put it past" bin Laden or Saddam Hussein to try to kill Americans with anthrax.

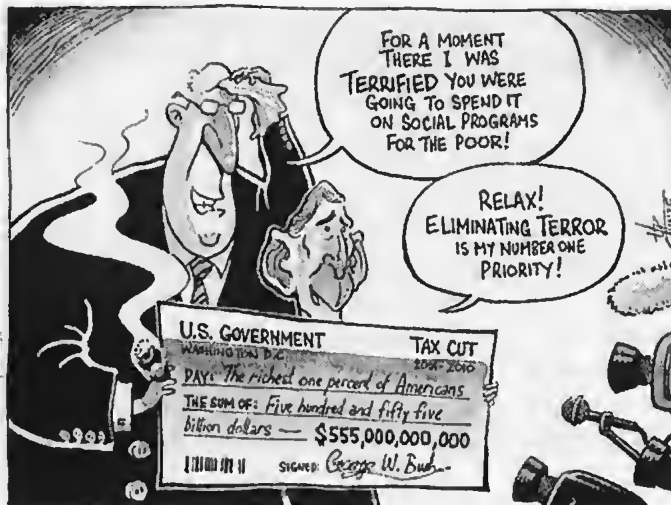
Most bioterrorism experts without an axe to grind said the attacks bore the hallmarks of domestic terrorists. By late December, even the Bush administration had to concede as much. In addition, the US Army had to admit that it had been manufacturing, since 1992, the

"weaponised" variety of anthrax used in the mailings.

The focus on "evildoers" had its uses for Bush and Co., however. At the height of the anthrax hysteria, a panicky Congress pushed through the USA PATRIOT Act, the worst attack on civil liberties since the FBI ran COINTELPRO operations against radicals in the 1960s. What's more, the focus on the likes of bin Laden and Saddam Hussein diverted attention from what should have been a bombshell revelation: The US military admitted to manufacturing weapons of mass destruction that it said it hadn't manufactured since 1969.

An investigation of the most likely suspects in the anthrax case, such as the far-right outfits that terrorise abortion providers, might have brought the feds a little too close for comfort for the likes of Ashcroft. Before losing his US Senate seat to a dead man in 2000, Ashcroft tested the waters as a presidential candidate for the Christian Right. He received \$26,500 from AmeriVision, a Christian Right fundraiser, according to a *Salon* magazine investigation. In addition to Ashcroft's presidential campaign, AmeriVision funded Prisoners of Christ, a support organisation for anti-abortion zealots who have been imprisoned for bombing clinics and murdering abortion providers.

If anything exceeded the seriousness of Bush's attacks on civil liberties, it was the shamelessness with which the administration and its corporate cronies continued to push their self-serving agenda. Under the guise of a recession-fighting "stimulus package," Bush signalled his willingness to open wide the taps of corporate welfare. Not content to shovel out \$15 billion in aid to the airline industry



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and \$22 billion in a sweetheart plane-leasing deal to Boeing – corporations that have laid off about 150,000 workers since September 11 – Bush now wants the government to refund tax money to a list of top-ranking US corporations. In the understatement of the year, Dirk Van Dongen, president of the National Association of Wholesaler-Distributors, told the *Wall Street Journal*, “There is a general feeling George W. Bush has been a great president for the business community.”

## Handouts

Bush and his supporters have had few scruples about invoking the “war on terrorism” to defend the most naked handouts to big business. As we went to press, Bush was readying regulations that would undermine crucial parts of the Clean Air Act applied to energy producers. These changes are crucial to the war on terrorism, the administration insists, because they will aid in developing non-Mideast sources of energy. In December, House Republicans also wielded the “national security” club to win one-vote passage of another corporate handout: trade promotion, or “fast-track,” authority. To big business, sacrifice is for suckers and patriotism is just another marketing angle.

The White House and its media toadies have sounded calls for national unity behind Bush’s programme, virtually equating any criticism of Bush’s right-wing agenda with support for terrorism. The Republican Party even ran an ad in South Dakota depicting Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle side by side with Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein. Never mind that Daschle helped Bush to push the airline bailout and the USA PATRIOT Act through Congress. Since Daschle doesn’t support drilling for oil in the Alaska National Wildlife Refuge, the ad contends, he’s in Saddam’s pocket.

This political spin has grown more hysterical because Bush and his handlers know that Bush’s high approval ratings can only go down. In opinion polls, worries about the recession and the economy have recently displaced worries about terrorism. “The economy is Bush’s soft

The images that streamed from Afghanistan after the fall of Kabul were a propaganda dream for the US regime. Afghan women, after years of cruel subjugation by the Taleban, were daring to shed their veils and expose their faces once again to the world. Cut now to the Prince Sultan US Air Force Base in Saudi Arabia. An American fighter pilot is climbing into a Chevrolet Suburban to make a trip off-base. The pilot, a Lieutenant-Colonel, is not wearing an Air Force uniform. The officer of the US military is instead wearing an “abaya” – a slightly less restrictive version of the burqa, it is still a suffocating head-to-toe robe. The officer is of course a woman. Martha McSally (pictured) was the first woman to serve in combat missions and is America’s most senior female officer. At the beginning of 2002 she won a



legal battle to overturn an Air Force regulation requiring women to wear the abaya when away from their bases. Now, it is no longer required, but merely “strongly recommended.”

That’s right. After dropping bombs on Afghanistan, supposedly (amongst other things) to liberate its women from such gross injustices as having to wear the burqa, America’s women pilots were then required to don an almost identical garment should they wish to venture out of their own base.

underside,” Republican pollster Bill McInturff told the *Los Angeles Times*. “[Bush’s] father lost [the 1992 election] because he had a kind of patrician, ‘let them eat cake’ attitude. He’s sworn not to let the same thing happen to him.” But that may be a difficult charge for Bush’s handlers to keep.

Bush has countered his father’s passivity in the face of recession with Clinton-like “I feel your pain” expressions of concern and a fanatical pursuit of tax cuts for the rich and handouts to big business. He’s banking on the fact that his media acolytes won’t notice that he plans a banquet for Corporate America while throwing a few bones to unemployed workers. He’s also getting a hand from the Democrats, whose 2002 election pitch seems to be “vote for us for a balanced budget.” If anything is guaranteed to give Bush and the Republicans a free ride, it’s Democrats sounding like lobbyists for the banking industry while workers continue to get hammered.

## Lining up at the trough

As Corporate America lined up at the trough, it sent more workers to the unemployment line. In just the last few months, standard-bearers of American capitalism such as LTV and Bethlehem Steel went under. In a spectacular collapse, the white-collar crime syndicate known as Enron imploded, leaving

15,000 workers – stripped of their retirement savings – on the street. General Motors and Ford announced nearly 40,000 layoffs – in addition to job cuts already announced.

The social inequalities of the 1990s will only worsen in a recession. Even if the economy begins to rebound, unemployment will continue to increase. The recession will deal some devastating defeats to unions, which were unprepared to take advantage even of the boom years. But it will also make other groups of workers fight harder.

School districts, city halls, and state universities will try to push through cuts in essential programs. Meanwhile, the lifetime limits in former president Bill Clinton’s welfare reform are taking effect now in states around the country – just as the effects of the recession take hold. The US will now experience the full impact of the shredded safety net.

These developments will heighten the issue of class inequality in all areas of US society. It will be harder to sell corporate giveaways as necessary concessions to national unity. More people will ask why their Social Security or Medicare has to be sacrificed for the Pentagon or corporate welfare. The issues of class inequality, the American injustice system, and others that moved people before September 11 will re-emerge in a sharper way. ■



# argentina's new year r e v o l u t i o n

You may not have seen much about it in the mainstream media, but thousands upon thousands of ordinary Argentines have been taking to the streets for days on end in a struggle against poverty and police repression.

The crisis in Argentina is the culmination of years of worsening conditions. The conservative government of Fernando de la Rúa, in cahoots with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), had steadily cut welfare, particularly pensions. About a third of the population has been forced under the poverty line.

At the same time, massively high inflation rates and the opening of the economy to exploitation by stronger capitalists have led to the collapse of local manufacturing and thousands being thrown out of work.

In response, the trade union movement has held seven general strikes in the last year and a vibrant movement of the unemployed has sprung up. Unemployed workers have been taking a form of strike action by picketing major highways, stifling economic activity on the streets and bringing industry to a halt. They have fought a number of battles against the police.

So how did all this come about?

In the wake of the 1997 Asian economic crisis, US corporate giant AGS Financial hailed the "economic strengths" of the

Latin American "tiger economies." Of these triumphs of neoliberalism, Argentina led the way with a whopping projected growth of 8%.

Now, after four years of recession and with an unpayable \$150 billion debt, Argentina is an economic disaster – a disaster made by the very same neoliberal policies lauded by AGS, the IMF and the Argentinian government.

The crisis is social as well as economic. However the mainstream media has fixated itself on speculations about the Argentinian currency, underlining two bourgeois priorities.

Firstly, that the rich should not be disadvantaged. The Argentinian worker can go without food, but the banks want their loans (plus exorbitant interest) paid back on time and in full, thank you very much.

But the second, more important priority for the media is to ensure that we don't get wind of the fact that ordinary Argentines may be able to determine the outcome of events. After all, if they didn't have to wait until the next election to get rid of the scum in parliament, why should we? The ruling class, whose interests the mainstream media propagates, certainly don't want us learning any such lesson.

Unemployed workers sparked the current uprising. In response to the lack of unemployment benefits, the

unemployed organisations on December 18 gathered outside supermarkets, demanding food. Shopkeepers were reluctant to comply.

"We're coming back and we'll be bringing all our neighbours," screamed a 45 year old mother of six at a supermarket

at Buenos Aires' most exclusive shopping centre. The next day workers decided to take the food for themselves.

600 stores were looted across the country, with the police killing a number of protesters. The government declared a state of emergency.

But it was too late. Hundreds of thousands poured on to the streets on the night of December 20, defying the 10pm curfew. All night long, the streets were choked with people banging pots and pans and chanting (of the President): "What

in to take on the police".

In regional centres like Cordoba, workers effectively took control of sections of the city. The unions called a general strike for the next day.

Such fighting spirit was irresistible. By the evening de la Rúa was forced to resign and flee by helicopter. Congress had to appoint another President, choosing a left wing politician of the populist Peronist Party. However the Peronists (under a previous President, Carlos Menem) had already proved themselves no friends of the workers.

"If the Peronists return, then we're back where we started," said one woman. "Menem, de la Rúa, they all drink from the same glass of wine," said a neighbour. "Nothing is going to change."

True to their word, continued protests since have thrown out the short-lived Peronist president, Rodriguez Saá, and in February mass protests were continuing against another Peronist appointee, Duhalde.

Argentina's economic and social crisis is unlikely to end in the near future, and greater levels of organisation could turn protests and strikes into genuine revolution.

The Argentinian uprising shows us that revolution is possible in an advanced Western country. Moreover the crisis in Argentina, formerly the neoliberal darling of Latin America, shows that capitalism leads ultimately to impoverishment and social crisis.

There will be more battles like the one unfolding in Argentina. Consequently there has never been a better time to be a socialist in order to argue for and help turn protest into revolution. ■

**Tony Hartin**

*Pictures Opposite Page: Street demo  
Top: Workers vote at a mass meeting  
Left: Protesters outside parliament  
Below: Desperate crowds begging for food  
outside a supermarket*



an idiot, stick the state of emergency up your arse." The next day the protester ranks swelled with office workers who had decided to "take a detour" on their way to work.

The government tried outright repression – the police killed 31 and wounded 150. However protesters kept fighting all day. Participants spoke of the way such demonstrations bound people together: "Suddenly we started looking after each other, though we had never met before. When people on foot had to take a break, groups of motorcyclists charged



**Eric Ruder explains the importance of the protests against the World Economic Forum (WEF) at the beginning of February.**

For weeks leading up to the protests against the World Economic Forum, the media ridiculed demonstrators. Global justice activists are "less known for their deep thinking than for their willingness to trash cities," *New York Times* columnist Clyde Haberman sneered.

But the 15,000 people who marched in New York at the beginning of February proved the pundits wrong. They showed their commitment to taking up the fight for global justice – and took an important step forward.

There have been larger global justice protests over the past few years – in Seattle, Quebec City and Genoa. But this was the first major US demonstration to follow the September 11 attacks, which dealt the global justice movement a significant blow.

The protest against the WEF re-established the right – and the need – to speak out on the issues of global poverty, war and racism. Some parts of the global justice movement that turned out for other big demonstrations were missing. For example, the non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that baulked at turning a planned September 30 protest against the IMF and World Bank into a mobilisation against the war again played almost no role in New York.

And though the AFL-CIO trade union leaders called an indoor rally as part of the week of anti-WEF activities, it booked a hall that could only hold 400 handpicked staffers, guests and media. Rank-and-filers had to get themselves to the protests.

Nevertheless, the week of activities in New York gave thousands of people an opportunity to make their voices heard and overcome the isolation many felt as the right wing has gained momentum. And throughout the march, there was evidence of how new developments – above all, the scandal of Enron's collapse and the uprising in Argentina against free market policies – have helped to put wind back in the sails of our side. "They are all Enron, we are all Argentina," read one placard.

"There's been a perception that somehow we have to retreat, we have to step back," said Jaggi Singh of the Montreal Anti-Capitalist Convergence. "For people all over the world, knowing that in the belly of the beast – and in New York City in particular – there are thousands in the streets to make a clear statement against the WEF and against war is very powerful." ■

# Sending a message to the WEF



# sweatshop struggles

By Shomi Yoon

Globalisation is built on the backs of women workers. The harsh reality of capitalism has demanded the participation of these women in the workforce. The oppression and exploitation that these women face has created the wealth of this world. This is especially so in sweatshop factories. Working class women are subjected to extreme exploitation including workers not earning a living wage, dangerous working conditions, having to put up with sexual, physical and verbal abuse, and being enslaved by 14 hour long days with only two toilet breaks of two minutes each.

These harsh conditions are all too real. But what is just as real is the strength and militancy of working women throughout history. In 1908-9 women garment workers in New York City went on strike demanding an end to sweatshop conditions, equal pay, the vote for women, and childcare for working mothers. This gave birth to the celebrations of the first Women's Day. Too much emphasis is given today by the media, academics and even some activists on the stereotypical image of women workers being passive, submissive, docile and disorganised.

More emphasis should be placed on the potential strength working women have to bring the system to its knees.

## Nike protest

On 8 January 2002 there was an anti-Nike protest in Wellington. Around 30 people turned up to protest at a gala dinner organised for Nike's "ambassador" Tiger Woods. There were anti-sweatshop placards and signs, as well as a mock "slave auction", but very few chants and even less visible anger.

It was great to see something happening to publicise the harsh conditions of sweatshop workers but unfortunately this performance merely emphasised the stereotypical view of women: passive, submissive, docile and disorganised. The entertainment was a mock Nike workers' auction where the child labourer went to the lowest bidder. Four ethnic people (three women and a man) were dressed in raggedy blankets being auctioned off to a whip carrying suit representing Nike. The auctioneer was saying things like, "No bid is too low", "remember you can't sexually harass them unless you're a supervisor". I see the humour, I see the irony, but I'm sick of the constant subjugation of working women everywhere!

More emphasis should be placed on the potential strength working women have to bring the system to its knees.

## Sweatshops

Women in the sweatshops of the so-called Third World are incredibly exploited and do labour under terrible conditions, but they also have enormous potential power. By gathering these women together as workers, capitalism has unwittingly created its own gravediggers. If sweatshop workers themselves organise to fight back in unions and strikes, they can take on the

corporate giants – and win.

The Kortex strike that took place 20 years ago is still an inspiration of working people transformed in the course of their struggle. Kortex was a textile factory in Melbourne. The women that went on strike fitted into the stereotypes of passive, submissive, obedient and badly organised. But after ten days these women became more militant and aggressive and organised to even take on the union officials.

These women fought through cops with batons, bosses, their hired thugs, and the union officials to come out victorious after ten days. Of course it wasn't just on the picket line that attitudes changed. Men had to take over childcare and house chores so that their partners could attend the pickets for long hours. It is this kind of strike which proves that the so-called passivity of women depends on their social circumstances. Even a ten day struggle is enough for women to break free of passivity and heighten women's consciousness in order to fight for their own liberation.

## Potential Strength

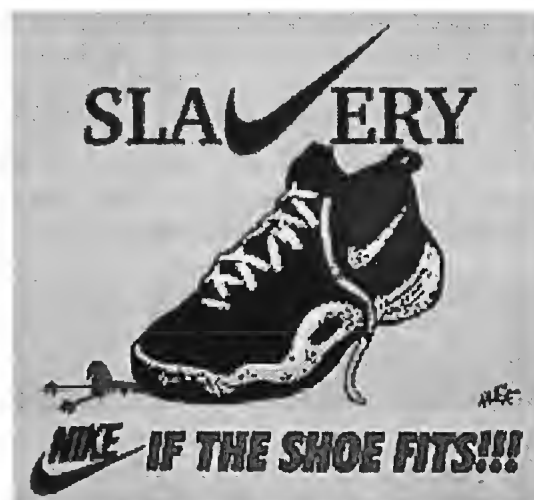
More emphasis should be placed on the potential strength working women have to bring the system to its knees.

Significant and meaningful change for workers in sweatshop factories will not come through people boycotting products such as Nike and Gap. Chie Abad (a former sweatshop worker from the Philippines) said, "I am not for boycotting... products – unless workers themselves say we need to boycott a particular manufacturer... sweatshop workers will lose their jobs". In order for boycotts to be effective they must be very well organised otherwise it will mean that we are just fighting for sweatshop workers to lose their jobs.

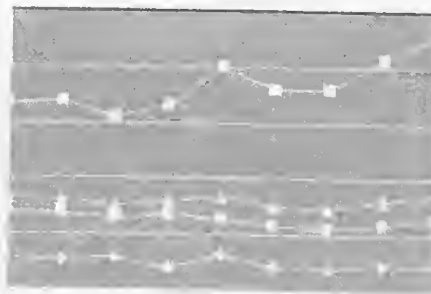
## Ineffective

This is why the slogan "Support NZ Made" is ineffective if you are truly intent on changing the conditions for sweatshop workers. We don't need to band together with the employers that exploit people here – we need to forge international solidarity with workers the world over.

Global grassroots movements opposing sweatshop labour may seem remote to us here in New Zealand, but they do already exist. Global political pressure and solidarity from a huge diverse range of groups, individuals, and workers have forced concessions from these corporate giants. ■



# The rich get richer, the poor get poorer (surprise, surprise)



Those of use who have been witness to events in New Zealand since 1984 have always argued that the reforms were designed to benefit the wealthy. So it has been little surprise to see, in recent years, a number of reports confirming this.

The latest of these reports, titled *Distributions and Disparity: New Zealand Household Incomes*, was released by the Ministry of Social Policy late in 2001. The report clearly identified what many people already knew – that under the reform process initiated by Labour in 1984 and continued under National from 1990 onwards, those already wealthy became more so and those at the other end of the scale became worse off.

The report received little mention in the media when it was released. The disturbing lack of coverage of the results presented in the “Household Incomes” report suggests a lack of interest by the media in examining the outcomes of 16 years of government policy.

## Report

In the report the Ministry of Social Policy report uses data from Statistics New Zealand’s Household Economic Survey to track real (adjusted for the effects of inflation) income for a range of different types of households over the period 1982 to 1998. This timeframe captures the economic restructuring unleashed by the Labour Government between 1984 and 1990 and its continuation by National after its election in 1990.

The overview of the report includes a reminder of the many events that assisted in the transfer of wealth to the already wealthy. These events included the significant reductions in the tax rate for high earners from 66% to 48% in 1986 and then to 33% in 1998, the introduction of GST in 1986 and large rise in the unemployment which occurred in the late 1980s and early 1990s. For those who have forgotten it also details the cuts made to benefits in 1991, when reductions for single beneficiaries were between 10% and 25% and for couples with children between 3% and 11%.

The report notes that “In 1998 dollars, median household incomes (an income level such that half of all households have incomes below it and half above) showed a drop to 1993, then

rose from then to 1998, but only about halfway back to the 1988 level”. The table below contains the actual numbers.

## Median incomes in 1998 Dollars, selected years

	1982	1988	1993	1998
<b>Before tax</b>	46,676	41,170	35,297	38,888
<b>After tax</b>	35,326	32,594	27,911	31,470

When analysed at a higher level of detail the results show how the impact differed widely for different income groups. For the highest decile (the highest earning 10%) after tax income rose by approximately 6% between 1982 and 1998, from \$66,553 to \$70,549. For the lowest 10% after tax income declined by 15.7% over the same period, from \$13,974 to \$11,778.

## Household incomes

When household incomes are equivalised (this is where household income is adjusted to take account of different household sizes) the picture becomes even more extreme. For those people in the lowest decile (10%) mean equivalent disposable income was \$11,522 in 1982, falling to \$9,557 in 1998. This was a drop of around 17%. For the top decile (the highest earning 10%) mean equivalent disposable income was \$67,057 in 1982 rising to \$91,291 in 1998, an increase of 36%. The graph above indicates the changes.

The economic policies of the period were justified partially on the grounds of a “trickle-down” theory. That is, if the wealthy were given tax breaks and increased income they would invest and create jobs which would provide employment for those on lower incomes. However, what happened instead was a flood of money upwards – exactly the reverse.

The full report is downloadable for the Ministry of Social Development’s website – [www.msd.govt.nz](http://www.msd.govt.nz) ■

**Alf King**

# Nurses fight for health

By Melissa Hofmann

On December the 3rd and 4th last year 2,500 nurses, midwives and other healthcare workers marched through Christchurch in protest as part of a strike that affected 16 hospitals. They were striking against low pay, long hours, understaffing and poor staff conditions and support. In the latest pay negotiations the New Zealand Nurses Organisation (NZNO) originally asked for a pay increase of 13% for nurses and midwives, the Canterbury District Health Board offered 4% and had no plans to budge.

Since the strike the media has been full of emotional stories of babies being flown to other hospitals, sick people put under extra stress and not-so-subtle messages that nurses are needlessly putting patient safety at risk for their own selfish gains. Others have not even tried to be subtle, The Press stated that nurses are selfish and greedy and others that they are even amoral. The political reaction has not been much different. Ken Shirley, the ACT Party labour spokesperson has stated that nurses are making unrealistic demands and his solution is to make nursing strikes illegal. This view was at least partly supported by our "left wing" labour minister Margaret Wilson who said that this idea was not ruled out for future policy.

Canterbury nurses only want to be paid fairly and at the same rate as other nurses in New Zealand. For the last decade nurses have been paid differently for doing the same job in different parts of the country, a system that's inherently unfair, but a legacy of the Employment Contracts Act under which nurses have been divided and exploited. A fifth year nurse will receive \$41,350 in Auckland and with the 6% wage increase gained,

in Christchurch a nurse will still only receive \$38,603.

Five other South Island District Health Boards have signed multi-employer collective agreements (MECAs) with the NZNO and nurses everywhere else in the South Island will be paid the same wages and receive the same conditions, a similar agreement is being considered for the North Island. There has also been a trend of growing disparity between nurse's pay and that of other health professionals. Radiation therapists for example have just gained a 25% pay rise, whereas nurses have had to struggle collectively for 6%.

**The strike however, was about more than just poor pay and conditions. It was also about the poor morale of the health workforce over the last decade of market led health policy. Nurses believe that compromising patient safety did not start with their strikes but is caused by the chronic overworking, understaffing and undervaluing of nurses and midwives.**

**Jean O'Callaghan, the spokesperson for the Canterbury District Health Board (CDHB) accepts that nurses are undervalued but stresses that demands cannot be met in one year, stating that there just isn't the money to pay nurses, midwives and other health professionals what they deserve. Nurses on the picket line however are dismayed by the CDHB's decision to fly in nurses to cover shifts from other parts of the country and pay these nurses triple time for their labour, they are also angered that the \$1 million spent on the strike could have gone towards meeting some of their concerns.**

The Labour/Alliance Coalition Government has placed much emphasis on the formulation of District Health Boards (DHB) which are supposed to be more community based, accountable and efficient. The government has been accused of handing the DHB's the responsibility of running health services, but not giving them enough money to do so, as illustrated by the Canterbury strikes. However, this situation is not limited to the CDHB, other DHB's face similar problems, the Taranaki DHB for example has a net working deficit of \$8.1 million, and is expected to treat more patients for less money with an 8% increase on patients seen over the last financial year.

Other health professional groups have also been watching the progress of the nurses' dispute with interest, as physiotherapists, occupational therapists, speech therapists, dental therapists, social workers, psychologists and dieticians prepare for wage negotiations. This government needs to address some of these concerns because as nurses gain collective strength and demand wages closer to what they deserve so will other related health services. John Shennan, Public Services Association Organiser, says that nationally standardised remuneration needs to be reintroduced or else strikes, lockouts and chaos will become commonplace.

Nurses have long been advocates for patient safety, they are the glue that is holding our health system together and it is the government who is not placing any regard on patient safety when they underfund the health system. ■

Brian Roper looks at continued attacks on tertiary education

# Troubled times at the degree factory



It may seem strange to refer to New Zealand's universities as degree factories but this is precisely what they have become as a result of 18 years of neoliberal educational policy. The Public Finance Act of 1989, in conjunction with the State Sector Act 1988 and the Education Act 1989, forced the universities to model themselves on a neoliberal idealised view of the private firm.

Universities now have annual reports and corporate plans, they compete with each other for "market share," and are managed by Vice Chancellors whose salaries have skyrocketed to over \$300,000 per annum. Students are "input" to the degree factory and degrees are the "output."

## Unmitigated disaster

The outcome has been an unmitigated disaster. Government funding for

universities has been provided on the basis of a certain amount of money per Effective Full Time Student (EFTS). This has forced universities to waste a huge amount of time and money on advertising and other schemes to attract students. Even worse it has created a nasty

competitive environment within universities because each department has been forced to compete with other departments in related disciplines for students. Academic and general staff thus have to waste time helping out with advertising, visiting schools, and so forth. And far from cooperating with each other in teaching and research, departments have been forced to try and "get one over" their "competitors" at every turn.

## Bureaucracy

Within the universities the level of bureaucracy has increased tremendously, and academics are chronically over-managed. For example, at the University of Otago in 1990 the management structure was small and relatively flat with a Vice Chancellor, Deans of Faculty, and Heads of Departments. Now there are two

Deputy Vice Chancellors, Assistant Vice Chancellors, Deans, Sub Deans, Heads of Departments, and Heads of Programmes. The same kind of thing has been happening in all of the universities – management has been eating up a steadily rising proportion of each university's resources (money, staff, office space etc.)

At the same time that the number of staff employed in management has increased dramatically, staff to student ratios have deteriorated, and workload for both general and academic staff have increased substantially throughout the university system. To make matters worse, "Academic salaries have fallen dramatically behind both earlier and current benchmarks and have not kept pace with domestic inflation. Since 1990 a backbench MP's salary has increased by 37%, a secondary teacher's by 28% and a university lecturer's by 15%. The consumer price index for that period totalled 25%. Staff salary increases in the university sector last year ranged between 1.5 and 1.7% while inflation increased by over 3%" (TEAC, *Shaping the Funding Framework*, p.17).

## Rising fees

Despite the fact that university sta

have been forced to do more work for less money, students have faced steeply rising fees. Even the above report admits that: "Average tuition fees from 1990 (when significant tuition fees were first introduced) to 1999 have increased for an initial degree programme from \$1,250 per annum to more than \$3,000 per annum. Partly as a result, average student loan debt increased substantially from 1992 to 1999, and is forecast to continue increasing."

The major reason that fees have gone up, forcing students into debt, is that government funding per student has gone down. Government funding per Effective Full Time Student (EFTS) has declined in real terms from \$8,446 in 1991 to \$6,423 in 1999. During the same period average course fees went up from \$1,538 to \$3,316. (All figures are expressed in 1991 dollars). You do not have to be a rocket scientist to work out what's going on here! As the report observes: "On a per-EFTS basis, the decrease in government funding has been almost entirely offset by an increase in tuition fees, once inflation is taken into account."

The overall result has been a growing mountain of student debt. According to the Ministry of Education *Student Loan Scheme Annual Report to 30 June 2001* total student debt had reached \$4.143 billion. By 2000 on average each university student was borrowing \$6,878 per year. 274,891 students had been forced into debt by 2000 and this number has continued to rise. Total student debt is projected to reach \$10.2 billion by 2009/10, \$13.4 billion by 2014/15 and \$16.1 billion by 2020 (TEAC estimates \$19.3 billion by 2020 if current government policy is maintained).

## Unfair

Student debt is a highly unfair way of funding tertiary education because it

reinforces existing inequalities in society. Students who are women, and/or Māori, and/or from working class backgrounds take far longer to repay the debt. Rich white male students don't need to borrow at all.

The Labour/Alliance Government is committed to changing the funding of tertiary education. It set up the Tertiary Education Advisory Commission (TEAC) to comprehensively review the system, and the TEAC reports will lay the foundation for the government's educational policy. The big problem is that the recommendations of the key report by TEAC – *Shaping the Funding Framework* – focus mainly on shifting the existing funding regime from being purely EFTS based to a combination of EFTS and funding tied to research output. In other words, tinkering with the current neoliberal setup rather than advocating real changes to it.



## Problems remain

All of the major problems will remain: fees and debt, deteriorating staff/student ratios, falling staff salaries and increasing workloads, and a competitive market model that wastes university resources. We in the International Socialists argue that this is not good enough. What is required is a return to the situation that prevailed for most of the postwar years – no significant fees,

no debt, adequate living allowances for students, salary increases that keep up with the rate of inflation, and universities funded through a system of progressive taxation in which those who benefit most from their education in terms of income pay most. In short, barrier free education funded through progressive taxation.

Such a system would be both more efficient because revenue collection is centralised and doesn't require a bureaucratic apparatus separate from Inland Revenue, and much fairer because students don't have to pay upfront fees and get into huge amounts of debt.

## Real change

Real change in tertiary education will never be achieved by simply voting for Labour, the Alliance or the Greens. However, it can be fought for and won through direct mass action by students

and staff. The mass student occupations of the 1990s did not defeat the neoliberal drive towards "user pays" education, but they did succeed in slowing it down and preventing the full blown privatisation of our universities. Recent industrial action by university staff has forced management to

come up with pay increases that come closer to keeping up with inflation than was achieved in most of the settlements reached during the 1990s.

The persistent underfunding of education by this Government means that further action of this kind is essential and likely. Strikes, protests, occupations: this is how to fight for positive change in education. ■

# Australia's refugee scandal



**Australian socialist Tom Bramble asks why John Howard is creating a fortress Australia**

With confirmation in February that Australian Prime Minister John Howard, Immigration Minister Phillip Ruddock and Defence Minister Peter Reith, together with their senior bureaucrats, all lied through their teeth in the weeks running up to the November 10 federal election about refugees "throwing their children overboard", the Australian Government's racist witchhunt against asylum seekers arriving by boat has taken something of a dent.

However, there is no sign that this vicious campaign is coming to a halt. The storming of the Norwegian freighter, the *Tampa*, by the Australian SAS in October 2001, the introduction of the so-called "Pacific Solution" whereby the Australian Government bribes neighbouring poverty stricken island states to take refugees heading for Australian shores, and the imprisonment in desert concentration camps of those refugees who do wash up in Australia have all been far too successful in diverting popular attention away from budget cuts, corporate collapses and all the other crimes implemented or covered up by the Howard Government.

## **Hunger strikes**

The hunger strikes by hundreds of asylum seekers in the desert camps of Woomera and Port Hedland in January focused international attention on the outrageous conditions that prevail in these camps. These centres were built in 1993 by the then Labor Government of Paul Keating who to this day still parades around as a friend of multiculturalism. They are located in the remotest spots of Australia to keep away relatives, social welfare agencies, refugee and legal advisory services and, of course, the media. In a recent twist, the news media have now been kept out of camera shot of the

Woomera detention centre in a media exclusion zone, just case the newspapers are tempted to take a shot of the prison conditions or, just as explosive, the resistance of the refugees themselves.

Australia's detention centres are run by Australasia Correctional Management, a branch of the Wackenhut Corporation, which has made its fortune running private prisons in the United States. Run on a for-profit basis, conditions in the camps are scandalous. Surrounded by razor wire, asylum seekers are subject to dehumanising conditions in which they are treated as hardened criminals, subject to twice daily musters, called by identification number (or worse), not by name. Their rooms and belongings are regularly searched by guards who are openly racist toward them. And they are kept behind the wire for, in some cases, years on end, men, women and children of all ages, denied access to family and most communication with the outside world. The results are tragic – suicides and attempted suicides, widespread depression and other psychological disorders, and sexual abuse.

## **Fortress Australia**

Fortress Australia is now complete. The Australian Government has now passed legislation allowing it simply to repel by military means all asylum seekers who are sailing by boat to Australian waters, and to turn them back to the point of departure. If they can't be turned back, they are then transported to the camps in Nauru, PNG and elsewhere.

Once "processed", those deemed not eligible for asylum are then repatriated, sometimes in a drugged-up state to avoid embarrassing scenes at airports. If repatriation is not



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possible (for  
example

because their homeland is at war), they will be imprisoned indefinitely until some bureaucrat decides that their homeland is now safe. Those locked up on the Pacific camps and deemed to be "genuine" refugees (which occurs in 84% of all cases) will then rot in the camps until some country decides to take them in.

Most likely this will not be Australia, which accepts only a minority of those which its own officials have decided are "genuinely" refugees. Those "genuine" refugees locked up in Australian camps are granted "Temporary Protection Visas" (TPVs) which may be temporary but are certainly not visas as usually understood and certainly don't protect their holders! Those on TPVs do not have access to English language tuition, meaning that they are most unlikely to find work. However, they also have no access to social security and therefore have to depend on charities and the goodwill of friends. They are not able to bring their families over, and their visas expire after three years at which point they are "encouraged" to return

to their homelands.

### Demonised

Meanwhile, the refugees are systematically demonised in the eyes of ordinary Australians. Not only are they accused of throwing their children overboard but they are routinely described as "illegals", "queue jumpers", or even "potential terrorists". "We don't want those sort of people in Australia," declaims John Howard when refugees sew up their lips in a desperate attempt to draw attention to their plight. In a further Orwellian manipulation of the language similar to George W. Bush's war of "Enduring Freedom", the whole racist farrago is presented as "Border Protection," as if the security of 20 million Australians is threatened by the three or four thousand asylum seekers who make it to Australia each year. The racism is sickening. No vicious smears or media barrage against the much larger number of overwhelmingly white European and North American backpackers and

tourists who overstay their visas.

### Howard's record

Given Howard's public record as a racist over the years, there is little surprise about his banging the racist drum about asylum seekers. What really sticks in the craw of millions of Labor supporters is the "me too" tailing of Howard by the Australian Labor Party. Kim Beazley, ALP leader at the November federal election, declared that Labor was "at one" with the Government on the issue of "border protection," with the result that more than 200,000 Labor voters switched their support to the Greens, and many more voted Labor while holding their stomachs.

The result was something of a post-election crisis within the ALP. Its new leader, Simon Crean, has uttered a few feeble words suggesting that perhaps women and children might be held in slightly less barbaric conditions, but the party still remains committed to mandatory detention, the desert camps, and Temporary Protection Visas. The

leadership criticises the Government's Pacific Solution not for its inhumanity and neocolonialism towards Pacific neighbours but for its burden on the budget! It was Labor, after all, that built the camps and popularised the terminology of "queue jumpers" and "economic migrants" back in the early 1990s.

## Deception

The Howard Government has won support for its racist policies by conjuring up a vision of a generous and welcoming Government taking "more than its fair share" of asylum seekers but which is threatened by "a flood of illegals" descending on Australia. The facts are rather different. Given the size, population and resources of the Australian continent, the Australian government is mean in the extreme. Seventy one countries accept refugees and asylum seekers and, of these, Australia is ranked 32nd. Relative to population, Australia slips further back to 38th, placing it somewhere behind Kazakhstan, Guinea, Djibouti and Syria, and well behind Tanzania which takes 20 times as many refugees as Australia.

The Australian Government accepts 12,000 refugees each year from around the world; by comparison Pakistan and Iran each hosts more than one million Afghan refugees. The statistics also explode one of the other common arguments, that the boat people are not "real" refugees but "cashed-up illegals" anxious to take advantage of Australia as a "soft touch". In fact, 97% of all Iraqis seeking asylum without valid visas in Australia in 1999 were subsequently found to be "genuine" refugees, as were 94% of Afghans.

## Resistance

The most heartening aspect of the whole situation is the resistance of the refugees

themselves. In January, hunger strikes spread like wildfire from Woomera to Port Hedland to Curtin detention centre in Perth and Maribyrnong in Melbourne, to the point where hundreds were involved, some taking the drastic action of sewing their lips together. This defiant resistance led to a minor but significant concession by the Government which resumed processing applications from Afghani asylum seekers whose applications were originally frozen in the aftermath of the American victory in Afghanistan. More dramatic still have been the riots, the breakouts, and the burning of camp buildings, which has happened on several occasions in the past two years.



## Galvanised support

It has been acts of resistance such as these that have galvanised support for the refugees in the wider community. In January and February there were many demonstrations in all the capital cities of Australia against the Government's treatment of the asylum seekers, with the largest rallies attracting up to 3,000. There have also been many large public meetings which have denounced the Government's actions, with several hundred crowding into halls in Melbourne, Sydney, Canberra and Brisbane to hear speakers organised by refugee support groups such as the Refugee Action Collectives. The demands are simple: shut down the detention centres, permanent visas not TPVs, expand the annual refugee intake

back to at least the level of 20,000 that prevailed in the early 1980s, and scrap the "Pacific Solution."

Just as significant as these rallies and meetings has been the widespread discontent evident within the Labor Party, with one opposition frontbencher and several backbenchers publicly coming out in opposition to Labor's public support for the Government, and have several Labor politicians at state level. Labor for Refugees groups have been established in New South Wales and Queensland, and have attracted senior trade union figures who have also expressed their disgust at the party's stand. The stance taken by Labor

dissidents is an important component of the campaign to build mass support for the refugees.

## "Good reputation"

Many quite conservative political figures in Australia have suggested that the treatment of refugees is costing Australia's "good reputation" in international circles. They argue that after the warm glow produced by the Sydney Olympics, the Howard Government is now throwing away international

goodwill towards the country. Now while there's an element of truth in this it's also important to understand that Howard is probably on safe ground so far as governments around the world are concerned.

In the past ten years, every Western government has launched a war on refugees, tightening up intakes, denying refugees social or political rights, and organising raids and systematic harassment by the police and bureaucrats to make their lives hell. Parties led by "respectable" neofascists and racists such as Jorg Haider in Austria, Jean Marie Le Pen in France and Silvio Berlusconi in Italy have become significant political forces, while "establishment" parties such as the

German Christian Democrats are now led by outright racists and Tony Blair's "New Labour" turns out to be every bit as racist as Thatcher at her worst.

Like them, Howard understands that scapegoating refugees is a good way of dividing opposition to his agenda of cutting public spending, bashing trade unions, and forcing up the cost of public education while throwing billions at "defence" spending. And he's also stolen the thunder from Pauline Hanson, whose One Nation party has been completely outflanked by Howard and reduced to a miserable rump.

### Socialists

Socialists in Australia, of course, take a very different view! We say loud and clear that refugees from every corner of the world are welcome. We are for open borders: if the rich can move their money around the world without restriction, we are for the right of workers and the poor to go wherever

they can better their lives. Just as citizens of the European Union can seek work wherever they like within the EU, we are for extending that right to every citizen of the world in every country of the world.

The "refugee crisis" is the product of a world characterised by war and impoverishment in many countries. In most cases these evils are the result, directly or indirectly, of intervention by Western governments and corporations, most spectacularly with the cases of Iraq and Afghanistan. If there are costs associated with settling the refugees, therefore, let big business pay more taxes.

### Solution

In the long term, however, the refugee crisis cannot be solved within a capitalist world economy. Impoverishment and war are the natural products of a world

run for profit not human need. When the banks get together to draw up "structural adjustment programmes" for Africa, the Middle East, or Latin America, refugees are the natural result of what is nothing more than a war on the poor.

We need to abolish this system that creates massive "overproduction" of manufactured goods and foodstuffs and one refugee every 21 seconds and replace it with one in which the resources of the world are devoted to feeding, housing and clothing people. The resistance of the refugees shows that the struggle that may bring about such a world is possible even in the most dire of circumstances and their campaign for freedom deserves the support of everyone fighting for justice. ■

MEANWHILE, OUT AT WOOMERA....



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# green politics: [a new radicalism?]

By Brian Roper



## Radical credentials?

Since the 1999 election, when the Greens got 5.2% of the vote and seven MPs in parliament, they have carefully cultivated an image of radicalism. In 2000, Green MPs Sue Bradford and Nandor Tanczos received much media publicity while attending the anti-globalisation S11 protests against the WEF in Melbourne. A bill was introduced into parliament in the same year to restore the Emergence Unemployment Benefit to students and was opposed by all the other parties – including the Alliance.

The Greens are the only party committed to the decriminalisation of

cannabis. Most recently Sue Bradford and co-leader Jeanette Fitzsimons attended the Waitangi Day ceremonies and joined a protest where Māori activists were demanding sovereignty.

Most of the Green MPs have activist backgrounds – Sue Kedgley in the women's liberation movement, Rod Donald in the Anti-Apartheid



movement, Sue Bradford in the unemployed workers movement and the socialist left, Keith Locke in the Socialist Action League, and Nandor Tanczos who has a past involvement with anarchism. This helps the Greens to project themselves as being a party that combines activism directed towards environmental and other major issues with parliamentary politics.

Finally, when George W. Bush declared war on Afghanistan in the wake of the terrorist attacks in September last year, the Greens were the only parliamentary party to actively oppose the war. Alliance leader Jim Anderton initially uncritically supported Labour's pro-war stance, before rank-and-file Alliance members forced him to backtrack. Perhaps more than anything else it was this principled anti-war stance that enabled the Greens to earn the respect of those on the left who oppose the war, and to emerge as the main party to the left of Labour.

## The limits of Green radicalism

We agree with the Greens on a significant number of issues ranging from the logging of native timber on the West Coast (it must be permanently stopped!) to the decriminalisation of cannabis use (do it!) We applaud them for having the guts to oppose the war when neither Labour nor the Alliance would. And we recognise that many of the best progressive political activists in this country are in the Greens.

But we can also see that there are very real limits to the "radicalism" of

the Greens. The major problem with the Greens can be summed up in a phrase: the veneer is radical but the substance is not. Ultimately the Greens are committed to reforming rather than transforming the existing capitalist system. This is particularly clear with respect to the way in which the Greens explain the destruction of the natural environment and equate socialism with Stalinism.

## What's causing the environmental crisis?

Many people support the Greens because they are concerned about the destruction of the natural environment – both locally and globally. The mounting environmental crisis can be seen with respect to atmospheric pollution (ozone depletion and the greenhouse effect); deforestation of the world's major rainforests; declining stocks of non-renewable resources; and the increasing concentration of hazardous pollutants in rivers, soil and the ocean.

Surprisingly, the Greens do not provide a convincing explanation of this destruction. It is explained with reference to population growth, industrialisation and sometimes human nature. Environmental problems are being caused by a rate of population growth that is unsustainable and by a process of industrialisation driven by the human urge to exert rational control over nature. Other aspects of human nature such as human greed and material acquisitiveness drive people to continually increase production in order to create more wealth, using

non-renewable resources and destroying the natural environment in the process.

None of this is particularly convincing. Food production has increased at a faster rate during the past century and there is no evidence to support the view that the world's current population is unsustainable. However, even if it were the case that human population growth is excessive, this is unlikely to be resolved until the world's resources are more equally distributed. One of the major reasons that people in the so-called "third world" have large families is precisely because they lack even the most basic level of material security.

### Industrialisation

The process of industrialisation is driven forward by the capitalist desire for profit and can only be adequately understood in these terms. Finally, greed and material acquisitiveness are not general characteristics of human nature – all of the historical and anthropological evidence points to the fact that they are behavioural characteristics systematically fostered by capitalism.

What is missing from Green explanations of environmental destruction can be summed up in one word: capitalism. The so-called "industrial revolution" was actually driven by the emergence of a specifically capitalist system of production, distribution and exchange. In capitalism firms strive to maximise profits in conditions of market competition. This has resulted in a higher rate of growth than that produced by any other mode of production in human history. But it has also led to the destruction of the natural environment on a scale never seen before in history.

Capitalism is inherently and unalterably environmentally "unfriendly" because the process of capital accumulation internalises and privatises profits while externalising and socialising costs. When large industrial corporations run plants that pump pollutants into the sky and/or waterways the costs of this pollution are externalised or pushed onto others. The profits, however, go to the



executives, directors and major shareholders who own and control these corporations.

It is not a case of the odd business being "irresponsible" as the Greens imply, but of all businesses necessarily seeking to maximise profits by minimising costs. Because recycling and technology that reduces pollution add to production costs and reduce profits, business will generally try to avoid investing in these areas.

Business has far greater resources than workers and environmentalists to influence government in a direction favourable to their interests. Power and resources are very unequally distributed in environmental conflict precisely because capitalism is a system of exploitation that generates class inequality. While many Greens recognise that big business is able to exert a disproportionate influence over government, few think of this as being part of the normal operation of a capitalist society in which a small greedy capitalist minority actively exploits the large working class majority.

### The Green critique of socialism

The Greens are reluctant to identify capitalism as being at the heart of the global environmental crisis because this would commit them to acknowledging that much of the socialist critique of capitalism is sound. It would also commit them to taking socialism seriously as a democratic and environmentally sustainable alternative. Instead of doing this, the Greens opt for the politically convenient path of equating socialism with the brutally repressive and environmentally devastating regimes that existed in Eastern Europe (and still exist in China and North Korea).

The problem with the Green position on this is the fact that these Stalinist regimes presided over a system of heavily bureaucratised state capitalism that had nothing in common with the radically democratic vision of socialism developed by key figures in the Marxist tradition like Marx, Trotsky, Lenin, Luxemburg and Gramsci. According to these Marxists socialism involves the comprehensive democratisation of society – something clearly not existing in Russia or China. It is, therefore, fundamentally misleading and dishonest to suggest that Stalinism was "really existing socialism."

### The support base of the Greens

Another reason that the Greens are reluctant to criticise capitalism is due to the fact that many of those who support the Greens do quite nicely out of it. Alternative lifestyles are for the most part members of what Marx referred to as the petit bourgeoisie – small business owners. The Greens also have a lot of support amongst the professional New Middle Class and students. They have very little support

amongst the industrial working class. In short, the Green Party of Aotearoa is very much a party of the middle classes.

### Green Party policy

The policies of the Green Party are spelled out in a number of documents that can be downloaded from their website – [www.greens.org.nz](http://www.greens.org.nz). *Thinking Beyond Tomorrow (TBT)* released in November 1999 and *Green 2000 – Framework for an Eco-Nation* give a good sense of the Greens' overall policy framework. What is most remarkable is the complete absence of any kind of critique of capitalism. In *TBT* the Greens outline their "vision of a country where human needs are met without damage to the other species that share the earth with us." They argue that "Government, citizens and business must work together to make it happen."

Specific policies include: changing the way economic growth is measured in order to take account of resource depletion and environmental destruction; reduction of greenhouse gas emissions; "tax pollution more, work and enterprise less"; increase government investment in public transport; increase government investment in "pure research and the arts"; "actively promote fair, rather than so-called 'free' trade in international agreements"; tighten controls on foreign investment; and increase government support for small business through the establishment of "small business centres, new venture agencies, employment resource centres and similar organisations which provide mentoring and support for small to medium, community and cooperative enterprises." Democracy

will be improved by giving local government "the power to make decisions on a wider range of issues."

### Socialism and Green politics

Socialists share the Greens' concern about the destruction of the natural environment. We also seek to work cooperatively with the Greens in struggles like the GE Free campaign. But we reject completely the idea that the Greens' four key principles – ecological wisdom, social justice, non-violence, democratic decision-making – can be achieved while capitalism dominates the globe.

The assumption underpinning all of the Greens' policies is that a partnership between "government, citizens and business" is both possible and desirable. This completely ignores the fact that under capitalism production is organised for corporate greed and not human need. The huge inequalities that exist in the world between rich and poor are caused by the exploitation that

Nothing in the Greens' policies addresses the fact that tinkering with the electoral system and the legislative framework for local government will do little to seriously increase the amount of influence that citizens can exert over government. Even if they were implemented the Greens policies would do little to seriously reverse the neoliberal policy agenda that has made the rich much richer, and most of us poorer. In particular, the Greens, unlike the Alliance, are not committed to increasing taxes on big business and high income earners.

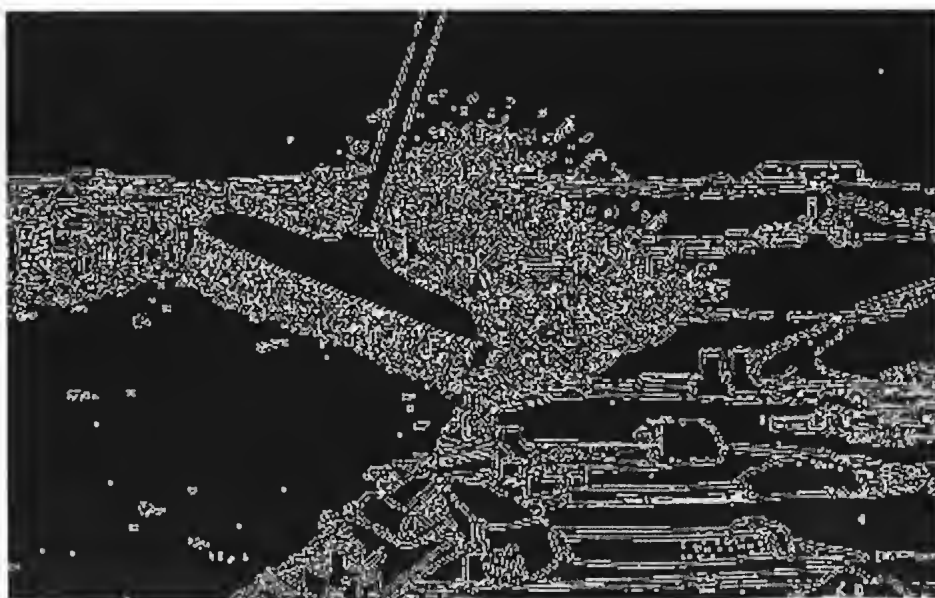
Even worse, most of the "eco-taxes" proposed by the Greens, such as the introduction of carbon tax on petrol, coal and gas, will actually hit the poor hardest. Consumption taxes like this are unfair because the poorer you are, the higher the proportion of your income that you spend on consumption rather than saving and investment. In contrast, the rich can usually find ways of avoiding these taxes. If the Greens were

serious about using the tax system to create a more equal and environmentally sustainable society, they would increase the taxation of corporate profits instead of increasing the amount of consumption tax paid by workers and the poor.

For these reasons, amongst

is at the core of the capitalist system. Further, because capitalism internalises the benefits of industrial production in the form of profit, while externalising the costs in the form of environmental destruction and pollution, there is no way that the world's major environmental problems can be solved as long as capitalism continues to exist.

others, we argue that if you really are concerned about the destruction of the natural environment, social justice and democracy, the place to be is in the International Socialists fighting for a democratic and environmentally sustainable socialist alternative to capitalism. ■



# information technology & the free market myth

**Mike Tait looks  
at how big business  
is benefiting from  
the "war on terror"**

A stone's throw from the Beehive in Wellington is one of the biggest monuments to social democracy in New Zealand – the huge, temple-like dome of the railway station foyer. Inside that dome is a plaque commemorating the partnership between the state and the Fletcher business empire, then just a fledgling construction firm.

It was the 1930s Labour Government's state house building programme, not competition on the free market, that laid the foundations of the Fletcher family's wealth. James Fletcher served on a Cabinet appointed building committee and, *hey presto*, Fletcher Construction won half the government contracts to build state houses.

## Rhetoric

The rabid free market rhetoric of Reagan, Thatcher and our own Roger Douglas, which blamed government meddling for recession, was always a lie. The free market can't survive without state support – to tide them over tough times, to carry the cost of building basic infrastructure, to smash open markets, or crush national rivals.

Just as interventionist governments from the US to Nazi Germany saved capitalism from the 1930s Depression by building dams, railways, and roads (and going to war), so businesses always come back to the state for a dip into workers' pockets to tide them over the next recession.

But there's no better time for corporations to rally round the flag (or feeding trough) than wartime. During wartime, the media muzzles itself, and substitutes emotion for information. Wages and conditions at work are shoved off the agenda – and military efficiency and unquestioning obedience become the highest civic virtues. But best of all, state spending increases massively.

## Military IT

Aeronautics and armament firms are the traditional beneficiaries of wartime spending, and with US defence spending set to hit \$396 billion next fiscal year, there should be plenty to go around. But the new kid on the block is the information technology sector.

Before the terrorist strikes, US Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld was on a collision course with the

Pentagon over the future direction of the US military. Rumsfeld favoured cutting back on Cold War weapons designed for use against a Soviet

style enemy. He wanted a smaller, more flexible force that could blow away any opposition through vastly superior military technology.

The "war on terror" means that Rumsfeld

can invest in high tech weapons without taking the big war toys away from the Pentagon generals.



## Video game fantasy

These weapons include unpiloted aerial vehicles – which have been used in Afghanistan. In the ultimate video game fantasy, CIA operatives in the US can fly remote controlled planes in Afghanistan, and use "Hellfire" to kill the locals. Robot

machines are also being made for the army and the navy. Along with space based radar and new global communications systems, the US defence budget will pump billions into the IT industry.

But the real windfall will be in surveillance technologies. Airlines are rushing to bring in a data mining program that will swiftly compile a personality profile on all fliers; massive surveillance camera programs and the sophisticated technology that make them effective are suddenly publicly acceptable; and the US Coast Guard has demanded "smart card" identification for all seafarers. The US defence department has already ordered cards for 4.3 million personnel, and may extend them to more of the 23 million names on the defence department's database, including family members, retired military personnel and contractors.

Technology firm ActivCard, which provides the software, has reported a flood of fresh interest from governments worldwide since the 11 September attacks, according to ZDnet. The US deal could herald a new source of demand for smart card makers, whose sales have been stifled by a year-long slowdown in mobile phone sales and the slow take-off of chip-based bank cards in the US.

"This is extremely important, not only to us, but to the whole smart card industry. It's the biggest Java-based smart card order yet," ActivCard Senior Vice President Tom Arthur said. "The level of interest has clearly accelerated since the attacks. Before, we had about a dozen interested parties. Now we have a dozen government projects in the pipeline from Europe, Asia and the Middle East, a dozen more from US federal agencies and state departments and a handful of projects from European and Asian militaries," Arthur said.

### Capitalism means regimentation

Remember the heady days of the IT boom, when fun-loving whizkids were heralding in a new age of business? Not just business, in fact, but new society, philosophy etc etc. The old days of grumpy grey suited capitalists and grimy, disgruntled blue collar masses were over. The information boom that was supposed to be revolutionising the economy and society turned out to be a bubble, and the grumpy grey suited bosses cancelled credit until the whizkids learned who was boss.

The flexibility of the new technology, especially the varied and vibrant communication over the Internet, seemed to promise a new kind of technology, antithetical to the coal mines, steel works, and auto factories that many associate with capitalism. Even the name of computer multinational Microsoft seems to invert that particularly American value "bigger is better".

But there are limits to the amount of diversity the system

can tolerate. Few firms would hesitate if they were given the choice between many diverse demands from a splintered market, and one massive deal with the world's most monolithic customer – the US military. Information technology can be tested to its limits developing weapons, communications, and control systems for the military, with little fear of a fickle market.

### Technological advances

The technological advances of the last twenty or thirty years have been staggering, and they have immense potential. But on their own technological changes cannot overcome the hierarchy and exploitation that characterises work.

In the last analysis, the wealthy few who govern this world have no interest in getting rid of hierarchies. Whether in real time or cyberspace, this elite has the ability to control the way technology is used: either nice, by cutting off funds; or nasty, with cops and guns.

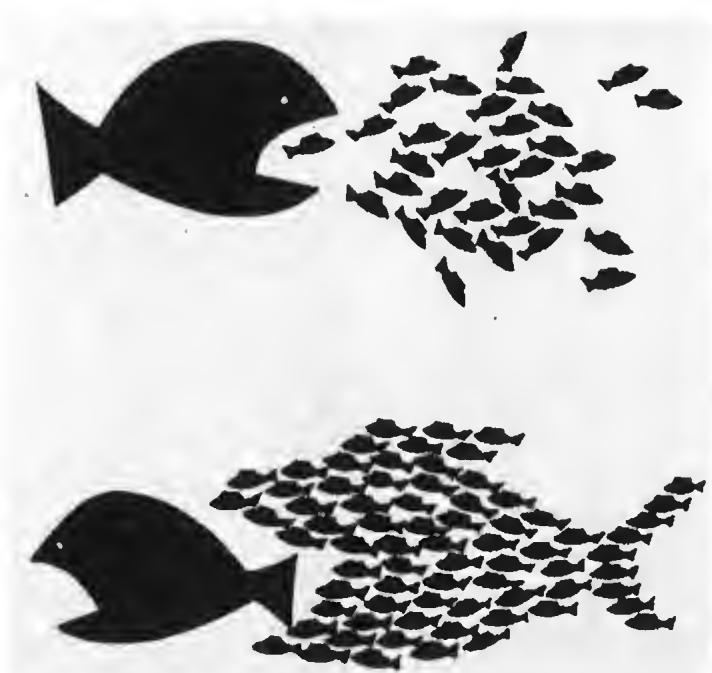
So long as a wealthy elite dominate the economy, new technology will always be perverted to keep the system the way that it is. This means labour-saving devices allow you to work longer; and communication devices that allow them to keep tabs on you.

We're not in the *Matrix* though, and technology – machines – are neither good nor evil. It takes human agency to change society, whether for better or worse. And the only human force that can get rid of hierarchy, exploitation and oppression is resistance by working people to the militarisation of society, against long hours of work, and against the roll back of hard won civil rights.

In resisting the system, the potential for a new society is born, where information technology can be used creatively, and its

development isn't hampered by competition and crisis; or perverted by Pentagonic killing machines. ■





# united we stand?

**"United We Stand, Divided We Fall!"**

**"Workers of the World Unite!"**

**"March Separately, Strike Together!"**

**"Kia Kaha!" (together we are strong)**

These slogans all stress the vital importance of unity and solidarity in struggle. For example, the only way to stop a brutal and bloody imperialist war like that currently being waged against the so-called "axis of evil" by George W. Bush, with the full military might of the US state and the uncritical backing of the world's corporate media, is to build a mass anti-war movement.

This involves bringing together a range of groups on the left, with very different political outlooks, who can act in solidarity with each other to achieve a common aim (stopping the war) through agreed means (mass protest). Other examples of the importance of solidarity include the campaign to oppose GE for corporate gain which was led by the Greens but was supported by the wider left in New Zealand.

What these examples show is that, as Trotsky put it, "To fight the working class must have unity in its ranks." It is, therefore, vital to understand how we can build united struggles while also recognising why unity can be so hard to create and sustain.

In New Zealand currently there is an obvious lack of unity and solidarity

within both the union movement and the left more generally. Whereas a high level of union solidarity was evident during the last major upturn in working class struggle from 1968 to 1977, today there are virtually no solidarity strikes where one group of workers takes industrial action in support of another group of workers who are defending themselves against attacks by their employer and/or pushing for better pay and conditions. Most unions are focusing on successfully mobilising their own members in support of pay claims and currently are not militant enough to take on the anti-solidarity provisions of the Employment Relations Act.

So while there are still inspiring examples of solidarity when unions take action, such as the widespread support for waterside workers early last year, the overall levels of solidarity are lower than during the last major upsurge in working class struggle.

## **Wider left**

If you look at the state of the wider left in New Zealand today there are obvious difficulties in building united campaigns around particular concrete issues.

The parliamentary left is divided between the Alliance and the Greens – the Alliance remains pissed off because of the Greens' departure in 1997 and

subsequent success. The socialist left is fragmented into small groups, none of whom are capable of exerting any real influence over the political situation in the country as a whole. And much of the anarchist left, which is even smaller than the socialist left, seems more interested in condemning everyone else on the left than helping to build united campaigns around important issues such as opposing the war.

In a very small country like New Zealand, with a tiny left, these differences often take a highly personalised form, ie Group X doesn't get on with Group Y because Person A hates Person B. But this is a very superficial and misleading view of the causes of division on our side of the struggle. Most obviously it is important to recognise that the conflicts between different personalities on the left generally reflect deeper political differences over fundamental issues – such as whether mass direct action or parliamentary reform is the best way to change things. But even more importantly it is important to understand how the capitalist system itself divides us.

## **Causes of division**

Capitalism repeatedly divides in order to conquer. Unemployment creates competition between individual workers belonging to different ethnic

groups for jobs, often fuelling racism. Sexism, racism and nationalism create divisions within the working class – between women and men; between Pākehā, Māori, Pacific Island and Asian people; and between people who come from different nations. These forms of oppression, together with the prevalence of nationalist ideology, discourage workers from recognising the extent to which they have interests in common that are opposed to the interests of the rich.

During major struggles the employers, government and police often attempt to foster divisions between moderates and militants, and the media nearly always sides with capitalist employers and the government. All these sources of division make their side stronger while weakening ours.

In recent years divisions on the left have become more pronounced. The low level of industrial class struggle between 1997 and 2001 has been a major factor in this regard. Amongst workers strike activity fell to the lowest levels seen since the 1930s. Because it is only through actual involvement in struggle that the importance of solidarity and unity becomes clear, when the level of struggle is low it is easy to focus on those things that divide rather than unite us.

### Sources of unity

This is why we in the International Socialists always argue for solidarity and unity – it is only through maintaining solidarity and unity that we can struggle *and win*, whether these struggles are to defend or advance the interests of workers, flax roots Māori, students, or women. Our enemies are united and strong, we must be too if we are to defeat them.

This is by no means a hopeless task. Capitalism not only divides us, it also generates forces that repeatedly push workers, Māori, women and students to engage in united collective struggle against capitalists and the governments that look after their interests while

attacking ours. The exploitation that is at the core of New Zealand's capitalist economy generates massive inequalities and concentrates wealth and power in the hands of a small greedy capitalist minority. Every now and then resistance breaks out against this exploitation.

This resistance can take a variety of forms – from strikes to marches and occupations. This is where groups like the International Socialists have an important role to play. Despite being very small, a socialist organisation like ours brings together experienced activists who can bring their expertise and the lessons from previous struggles into the current one. For this reason the socialist left can have an impact on campaigns and struggles quite out of



proportion to its size.

As Lenin pointed out, the socialist organisation acts as the “memory of the class” – retaining, preserving and carrying forward practical knowledge gained from involvement in earlier struggles to struggles in the present. For this reason we socialists make no apologies for the fact that when we involve ourselves in any particular campaign we do so both to build the

campaign and to build our own organisation in the process.

### Socialists and struggle

As socialists we recognise that we cannot place any conditions on our involvement in the everyday struggles of workers and the oppressed. But we do insist on our right to retain our political independence – particularly our freedom to criticise those who we are uniting with and to produce and sell our own propaganda and publications.

We also argue that it is not currently realistic to seek unity on a broad range of issues. Rather, we argue for unity in struggles that focus on specific issues and where there is a reasonable amount of agreement over the course of action to be pursued.

A good example of how this can work in practice is the protest movement against the 1981 Springbok Tour – there was sufficient agreement amongst the diverse range of groups involved about the aims of the movement (stopping the tour, ending Apartheid) and the course of action (mass militant protests using the tactic of non-violent civil disobedience) to build one of the largest and most successful protest movements in this country's history.

The recent strikes by nurses, teachers, university staff, and other groups of workers, suggest that a revival of industrial struggle is gathering momentum. The GE Free and Anti-War campaigns have also shown us that protest is not dead. If and when the level of struggle does pick up it is the duty of all those on the left to get stuck in and help to build this struggle. This will only happen if there is a concerted effort to overcome the sectarian divisions that have built up on the New Zealand left during the past decade. And this, in turn, requires that we all start to think about the real meaning of the slogan – “united we stand, divided we fall.” ■

**Brian Roper**

# The tyranny of "structurelessness"



By Jo Freeman

The question of how we should work through our debates as activists is one of the main issues that last year confronted the growing anti-war movement. As socialists we have always argued for majority-based decision making as the best way for coalitions and groups to organise. But doesn't this contradict our commitment to democracy? Aren't consensus based decision making and informal organisation the most democratic ways of going about our work? In this article, written as a response to similar arguments in the women's movement in the early 1970s, American feminist, scholar and author Jo Freeman looks at some of the issues around "consensus" and "structurelessness." A full text of "The Tyranny of Structurelessness" is available on Jo Freeman's website at [www.jofreeman.com](http://www.jofreeman.com)

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During the years in which the women's liberation movement has been taking shape, a great emphasis has been placed on what are called leaderless, structureless groups as the main – if not the sole – organisational form of the movement. The source of this idea was a natural reaction against the overstructured society in which most of us found ourselves and the inevitable control this gave others over our lives, and the continual elitism of the left and similar groups among those who were supposedly fighting this overstructuredness.

The idea of "structurelessness" however, has moved from a healthy counter to those tendencies to becoming a goddess in its own right. The idea is as little examined as the term is much used, but it has become

an intrinsic and unquestioned part of women's liberation ideology. For the early development of the movement this did not much matter. It early defined its main goal, and its main method, as consciousness-raising, and the "structureless" rap group was an excellent means to this end. The looseness and informality of it encouraged participation in discussion, and its often-supportive atmosphere elicited personal insight. If nothing more concrete than personal insight ever resulted from these groups, that did not much matter, because their purpose did not really extend beyond this.

The basic problems didn't appear until individual rap groups exhausted the virtues of consciousness-raising and decided they wanted to do something more



specific. At this point they usually foundered, because most groups were unwilling to change their structure when they changed their ideas. Women had thoroughly accepted the idea of "structurelessness" without realising the limitations of its uses. People would try to use the "structureless" group and the informal conference for purposes for which they were unsuitable out of a blind belief that no other means could possibly be anything but oppressive.

If the movement is to grow beyond these elementary stages of development, it will have to disabuse itself of some of its prejudices about organisation and structure. There is nothing inherently bad about either of these. They can and often are misused, but to reject them out of hand because they are misused is to deny ourselves the necessary tools to further development. We need to understand why "structurelessness" does not work.

### Formal and informal structure

Contrary to what we would like to believe, there is no such thing as a

structureless group. Any group of people of whatever nature that comes together for any length of time for any purpose will inevitably structure itself in some fashion. The structure may be flexible; it may vary over time; it may evenly or unevenly distribute tasks, power, and resources over the members of the group. But it will be formed, regardless of the abilities, personalities or intentions of the people involved. The very fact that we are individuals with different talents, predispositions and backgrounds makes this inevitable. Only if we refused to relate to or interact on any basis whatsoever could we approximate structurelessness – and that is not the nature of a human group.

This means that to strive for a structureless group is as useful, and as deceptive, as to aim at an "objective" news story, "value-free" social science, or a "free" economy.

A "laissez faire" group is about as realistic as a "laissez faire" society; the idea becomes a smokescreen for the strong or the lucky to establish unquestioned hegemony over others. This hegemony can also be easily established because the idea of "structurelessness" does not prevent the formation of informal structures, only formal ones.

Similarly, "laissez faire" philosophy did not prevent the economically powerful from establishing control over wages, prices, and distribution of goods; it only prevented the government from doing so. Thus, structurelessness becomes a way of masking power and, within the women's movement, is usually most strongly advocated by those who are the most powerful (whether they are conscious of their power or not). As long as the structure of the group is informal, the rules of how decisions are made are known only to a few, and awareness of power is limited to

those who know the rules. Those who do not know the rules and are not chosen for initiation must remain in confusion or suffer from paranoid delusions that something is happening of which they are not quite aware.



For everyone to have the opportunity to be involved in a given group and to participate

in its activities, the structure must be explicit, not implicit. The rules of decision



making must be open and available to everyone, and this can happen only if they are formalised. This is not to say that formalisation of a structure of a group will destroy the informal structure. It usually doesn't. But it does hinder the informal structure from having predominant control and make available some means of attacking it if the people involved are not at least responsible to the needs of the group at large.

"Structurelessness" is organisationally impossible. We cannot decide whether to have a structured or structureless group, only whether or not to have a formally structured one. Therefore, the word will not be used any longer except to refer to the idea it represents. "Unstructured" will refer to those groups that have not been deliberately structured in a particular manner. "Structured" will refer to those that have. A structured group always has a formal structure and may also have an informal, or covert, structure. It is this informal structure, particularly in unstructured groups, that forms the basis for elites.

### The nature of elitism

Elites are not conspiracies. Very seldom does a small group of people get together and deliberately try to take over a larger group for its own

ends. Elites are nothing more, and nothing less, than groups of friends who also happen to participate in the same political activities. They



would probably maintain their friendships whether or not they were involved in political activities; they would probably be involved in political activities whether or not they maintained their friendships.

It is the coincidence of these two phenomenon that creates elites in any group and makes them so difficult to break.



These friendship groups function as networks of communication outside any regular channels for

such communication that may have been set up by a group. If no channels are set up, they function as the only networks of communication. Because people are friends, because they usually share the same values and orientations, because they talk to each other socially and consult with each other when common decisions have to be made, the people involved in these networks have more power in the group than those who aren't. And it is a rare group that does not establish some informal networks of communication through the friendships that are made in it.

Some groups, depending on their size, may have more than one such informal communications network. Networks may even overlap. Only when one such network exists, it is the elite of an otherwise unstructured group, whether the participants in it want it to be elitists or not. If it is the only such network in a structured group, it may or may not be an elite depending on its composition and the nature of the formal structure.

If there are two or more such networks of friends, they may compete for power within the group, thus forming factions, or one may deliberately opt out of the competition, leaving the other

as the elite. In a structured group, two or more such friendship networks usually compete with

each other for formal power. This is often the healthiest situation, as the other members are in a position to arbitrate between the two competitors and, thus, to make demands on those to whom they give their full or temporary allegiance.

Because elites are informal does not mean they are invisible. At any small group meeting anyone with a sharp eye and an acute ear can tell who is influencing whom. The members of a friendship group will relate more to each other than to other people. They listen more attentively and interrupt less; they repeat each other's points and give in amiably; they tend to ignore or grapple with the "outs" whose approval is not necessary for making a decision. But it is necessary for the outs to stay on good terms with the "ins".

Of course, the lines are not as sharp as I have drawn them. They are nuances of interaction, not prewritten scripts. But they are discernible, and they do have their effect. Once one knows with whom it is important to check before a decision is made and whose approval is the stamp of acceptance, one knows who is running things.

### Political impotence

Unstructured groups may be very effective in getting women to talk about their lives; they aren't very good for getting things done. It's when people get tired of "just

talking" and want to do something more than the groups flounder, unless they change the nature of their operation. Occasionally, the



developed informal structure of the group coincides with an available need that the group can fill in such a way as to give the appearance that an unstructured group "works". That is, the group has fortuitously developed precisely the kind of structure best suited for engaging in a particular project.

Some groups, if they do not involve many people and work on a

small scale, have formed themselves into local action projects. But this form restricts movement activity to the local level; it cannot be done on the regional or national. Also, to function well, the groups must virtually pare themselves to that informal group of friends who were running things in the first place. This excludes many women from participating. As long as the only way women can participate in the movement is through membership in a small group, the non-gregarious are at a distinct

disadvantage. As long as friendship groups are the main means of organisational activity, elitism becomes institutionalised.

The more unstructured a movement is, the less control it has over the directions in which it develops and the political actions in which it engages. This does not mean that its ideas do not spread. Given a certain amount of interest

by the media and the appropriateness of social conditions, the ideas will still be diffused widely. But diffusion of ideas does not mean they are implemented; it only means they are talked about. Insofar as they can be applied individually, they may be acted on; insofar as they require coordinated political power to be implemented, they will not be.

As long as the women's liberation movement stays dedicated to a form of organisation that stresses small, inactive discussion groups among friends, the worst problems of unstructuredness will not be felt. But this style of organisation has its limits; it is politically inefficacious, exclusive, and discriminatory against those women who are not or cannot be tied into the friendship networks. Those who do not fit into what already exists because of class, race, occupation, education, parental or marital status, personality etc., will inevitably be discouraged from trying to participate. Those who do fit in will develop vested interests in maintaining things as they are.

The informal groups' vested interests will be sustained by the

informal structures that exist, and the movement will have no way of determining who shall exercise power within it. If the movement continues deliberately to not select who shall exercise power, it does not thereby abolish power. All it does is abdicate the right to demand that those who do exercise power and influence be responsible for it.

If the movement continues to keep power as diffuse as possible because it knows it cannot demand responsibility from those who have it, it does prevent any group or person from totally dominating. But it simultaneously ensures that the movement is as ineffective as

possible. Some middle ground between domination and ineffectiveness can and must be found.

### **Principles of democratic structuring**

Once the movement no longer clings tenaciously to the ideology of "structurelessness", it is free to develop those forms of organisation best suited to its healthy functioning. This does not mean that we should go to the other extreme and blindly imitate the traditional forms of organisation. But neither should we blindly reject them all. Some of the traditional techniques will prove useful, albeit not perfect; some will give us insights into what we should and should not do to obtain certain ends with minimal costs to the individuals in the movement.

Mostly, we will have to experiment with different kinds of structuring and develop a variety of techniques to use for different situations. The Lot System is one such idea that has emerged from the movement. It is not applicable to all situations, but is useful in some. Other ideas for



structuring are needed. But before we can proceed to experiment intelligently, we must accept the idea that there is nothing inherently bad about structure itself – only its excess use.

While engaging in this trial-and-error process, there are some principles we can keep in mind that are essential to democratic structuring and are also politically effective:

- Delegating specific authority to specific individuals for specific tasks by democratic procedures. Letting people assume jobs or tasks only by default means that they are not dependably done. If people are selected to do a task, preferably after expressing an interest or willingness to do it, they have made a commitment that cannot so easily be ignored.
- Requiring all those to whom authority has been delegated to be responsible to those who selected them. This is how the group has control over people in positions of authority. Individuals may exercise power, but it is the group that has the ultimate say over how the power is exercised.
- Distributing authority among as many people as possible as is reasonably possible. This prevents monopoly of power and requires those in positions of authority to consult with many others in the process of exercising it. It also gives many people the opportunity to have responsibility for specific tasks

and thereby learn different skills.

- Rotating tasks among individuals. Responsibilities that are held for too long by one person, formally or informally, come to be seen as that person's "property" and are not easily relinquished or controlled by them. Conversely, if tasks are rotated too frequently, the individual does not have time to learn to do her job well and acquire the sense of satisfaction of doing a good job.

- Allocating tasks along rational criteria. Selecting someone for a position because they are liked by the group or giving them hard work because they are disliked serves neither the group nor the person in the long run. Ability, interest, and responsibility have to be the major concerns in such selection. People should be given an opportunity to learn skills they do not have, but this is best done through some sort of "apprenticeship" program rather than the "sink or swim" method. Having a responsibility one can't handle well is demoralising. Conversely, being blacklisted from doing what one can do well does not encourage one to develop one's skills. Women have been punished for being competent throughout most of human history; the movement does not need to repeat this process.

- Diffusing information to everyone as frequently as possible. Information is power.

Access to information enhances one's power. When an informal network spreads new ideas and information among themselves outside the group, they are already engaged in the process of forming an opinion – without the group participating. The more one knows about how things work and what is happening, the more politically effective one can be.

- Providing equal access to resources needed by the group. This is not always perfectly possible, but should be striven for. A member who maintains a monopoly over a needed resource (like a printing press owned by a husband, or a darkroom) can unduly influence the use of that resource. Skills and information are also resources. Member's skills can be equitably available only when members are willing to teach what they know to others.

When these principles are applied, they ensure that whatever structures are developed by different movement groups will be controlled by and responsible to the group. The group of people in positions of authority will be diffuse, flexible, open and temporary. They will not be in such an easy position to institutionalise their power because ultimate decisions will be made by the group at large. The group will have the power to determine who shall exercise authority within it. ■

## inside the system...

### ***Racism, knitting needles and the weather***

Richard Prebble believes NZ's refugee policy needs a "serious rethink." According to Mr Prebble, there are millions of refugees in the world and instead of taking refugees from "desert cultures" such as Somalia, the country should take "refugees who would have no difficulty integrating into New Zealand society - for example, white farmers being driven off their land in Zimbabwe." Perhaps white people feel the effects of the weather differently to others?

Mr Prebble's racism angered Abdi Bihi, on the executive committee of the Refugee and Migrant Commission, who said Mr Prebble's remarks were "so obvious and cheap." Parts of Somalia were

tropical and green and it was a joke to suggest that somehow people weren't able to adapt to a wet country.

*(New Zealand Herald)*

**In another piece of racism Mark Everitt, an aviation security boss, has announced that "passenger profiling" (read racial profiling) may become standard practice.**

**"I have a great deal of sympathy for the people who call me asking, 'why are we taking knitting needles off little old ladies?' What I want to do is establish a regime of passenger profiling, identify the ten people out of 400 on a 747 who could be the risk on that plane."**

**And the Taleban don't even know**

**where New Zealand is!**  
*(Consumer Magazine, December 2001)*

### ***The wages of sin...***

There's an old right-wing cliché about the number of ex-Catholics who are in socialist groups. They should all watch out!

A press release from the head of the Roman Catholic Church made it official - sin makes you sick. Ill health, diseases and depression are all attributable to the high levels of sin in today's society, the release said. Still, the hours are good.

*(The Dominion)* ■

## letters

Dear Socialist Review,

I appreciated the article by Leon Trotsky on terrorism that was reprinted in the last issue. The period Trotsky was writing in is in many ways different from now, but the arguments he makes against terrorism were illustrated on a horrific scale by the 11 September attacks. The scale of the attacks was in fact the only major difference from the early 1900s. In Trotsky's time, terrorist attacks were limited to the assassination of prominent individuals - princes, politicians, and Archdukes.

A century of capitalist development has increased the scale and sophistication of technology, and increased the misery and injustice that fuels conflict. The jet aeroplanes, skyscrapers, communications technology, and mobility of the global economic system collided with its conflicts on 11 September, with tragic results for the US office workers, the Afghan people, and civil liberties everywhere.

Despite increased opportunities for terrorism, it is as ineffective as it was last century. Worse, the increase in technological sophistication and power that makes massive terror attacks possible also makes

unprecedented repression possible. With derisory ease, US military might smashed all Afghan opposition, and elites worldwide are turning to high tech surveillance to monitor dissent.

Trotsky's insistence on democracy as essential to political progress is also valuable. When some liberal pundits suggested the attacks might serve as a wake-up call for the US, they exposed the elitist thinking that they share with the terrorists. The idea that ordinary people are incapable of fighting injustice and must be represented by a professional elite, whether MPs or terrorists, is diametrically opposed to socialism. It's also plain wrong. The attacks didn't make the US ruling class think twice about its foreign policy, they incited it to an orgy of imperialism.

The motivation that Trotsky sees for terrorism - revenge - is clearly apparent in the politics of Muslim extremists like Osama bin Laden, who the US blames for the attacks. But while we can sympathise with the desire for revenge sparked by the rank injustice of capitalism, there's no need to sympathise with political bankrupts like Osama bin Laden - the son of the Saudi ruling class and spawn of the

CIA.

Muslim fundamentalism is the bastard child of the corrupt regimes of the Middle East and Western secret services. Terrorism is the natural tool of this spiritual elite, and they can never provide a lead to Arab workers in the struggle against corrupt regimes or US imperialism. Worse, the spectacular nature of the attack and the savage US retaliation will be a serious blow to Arab resistance. As Trotsky put it, "in place of kindled hopes and artificially aroused excitement comes disillusionment and apathy."

At all levels in radical politics, there's a temptation to choose activities that only require a hard core of activists but have spectacular results. Greenpeace, ACT UP, and many other lobby groups choose media impact over grassroots struggle. They are *not* terrorist groups, but they share elitist assumptions and rely on wealthy patrons, just like bin Laden. 11 September was an extreme example of this style of protest, and it showed clearly that if the goal is liberation, there's no substitute for a democratically organised workers' movement. ■

**Mike Tait**

# RED WORDS

THIS ISSUE RED WORDS FEATURES POETRY BY AFGHAN POET MEENA AND R.A.K. MASON  
++ "IN THE BLUE HOUSE" REVIEWED

## I'll never return

I'm the woman who has awoken  
I've arisen and become a tempest through the ashes of my burnt children  
I've arisen from the rivulets of my brother's blood  
My nation's wrath has empowered me  
My ruined and burnt villages fill me with hatred against the enemy,  
I'm the woman who has awoken,  
I've found my path and will never return.  
I've opened closed doors of ignorance  
I've said farewell to all golden bracelets  
Oh compatriot, I'm not what I was  
I'm the woman who has awoken  
I've found my path and will never return.  
I've seen barefoot, wandering and homeless children  
I've seen henna-handed brides with mourning clothes  
I've seen giant walls of the prisons swallow freedom in their ravenous stomach  
I've been reborn amidst epics of resistance and courage  
I've learned the song of freedom in the last breaths, in the waves of blood and in victory  
Oh compatriot, Oh brother, no longer regard me as weak and incapable  
With all my strength I'm with you on the path of my land's liberation.  
My voice has mingled with thousands of arisen women  
My fists are clenched with the fists of thousands compatriots  
Along with you I've stepped up to the path of my nation,  
To break all these sufferings all these fetters of slavery,  
Oh compatriot, Oh brother, I'm not what I was  
I'm the woman who has awoken  
I've found my path and will never return.

## Sonnet to MacArthur's Eyes

General MacArthur looked down on the bodies of four young Korean soldiers. "That's a good sight for my old eyes," he said.

Newspaper Report

I have known old eyes that had seen many more aspects of war than this man has seen - eyes that had looked on Gallipoli or the keen edge of battle with the Boer or in even older war had known Balaclava and the Mutiny's evil score: such eyes as I've known them old have always been eager to see spring flowers and the youth who mean mankind's spring after war's winter. Never before

Have I known of anyone whose old eyes rejoice to see young men lying dead in their own land, never have I known one who of his own choice follows up the machines of death to take his stand over the slain and in a quavering voice declaim his joy at youth dead beneath his hand

September, 1950.

MEENA (1957-1987) was born in Kabul. During her school days, students in Kabul and other Afghan cities were deeply engaged in social activism and rising mass movements. She left the university to devote herself as a social activist to organising and educating women. In pursuit of her cause for gaining the right of freedom of expression and conducting political activities, Meena laid the foundation of the Revolutionary Association of Women of Afghanistan (RAWA) in 1977. This organisation was meant to give voice to the deprived and silenced women of Afghanistan. She started a campaign against the Russian forces and their puppet regime in 1979 and organised numerous processions and meetings to mobilise the public. Her active social work and effective advocacy against the views of the fundamentalists and the puppet regime provoked the wrath of the Russians and the fundamentalist forces alike and she was assassinated by agents of KHAD (Afghanistan branch of KGB) and their fundamentalist accomplices in Quetta, Pakistan, on February 4, 1987. Find out more at [h.t.p:/rawa.fancymarketing.net/meena.html](http://h.t.p:/rawa.fancymarketing.net/meena.html)

R.A.K. Mason (1905 - 1971) is one of New Zealand's most celebrated poets. As well as publishing over six volumes of poetry, he worked as a teacher, public works officer, secretary, trade union official and landscape gardener. Mason was a lifelong opponent of imperialism and a member of the New Zealand Communist Party. We can easily imagine what his response to America's "war on terror" would have been.

# In the Blue House by Meaghan Delahunt

Bloomsbury, 2001

Reviewed by Andrew Cooper

"When the Party rejected him, he had no alternative but to create something new – a new international party: The Fourth International. To challenge Stalin from outside. And people often asked why he wasted his energy on this small grouping, ineffectual, beset by divisions from the beginning. And my only answer, the answer I always give: He was a revolutionary: He knew no other way."

In her ambitious first novel, the Australian writer Meaghan Delahunt covers the last days of Leon Trotsky's epic and tragic life, before his death at the hands of the Stalinist agent Ramón Mercader.

*In the Blue House* presents in mostly brief snatches the voices of over a dozen people – both great and ordinary – who were touched by Trotsky's life.

We hear the voice of Jordi Marr, Trotsky's 23 year old bodyguard, haunted by the suicide of his anarchist father and his experiences in the Spanish Civil War, longing for the approval that Trotsky can never give him, and still reeling from his affair with the artist Frida Kahlo, Marr is thus fatally distracted and unworried by the gradually building presence of Mercader in Trotsky's household.

Stalin – Trotsky and the Revolution's nemesis – appears at the height of the Great Terror in 1932, on his deathbed in 1953 and during his brutal Georgian childhood.

Perhaps the novel's most accomplished section, "The Other Moscow," describes life for the millions of ordinary people living in that city at the height of Stalin's Terror. Mikhail Kosarev, a construction supervisor on the Metro, returns each evening to a tiny home on one floor of an apartment building, a meagre space rationed off by flimsy curtains for himself, his mother and sister. He despairs that each family cooks and cleans for itself – that there is no pooling of resources. But this is not a city embarked on any great socialist "experiment" but a smashed, terrorised and defeated proletariat of atomised individuals struggling for survival.



It is the voices of the lesser known in *Blue House* that seem to ring truest: the impoverished artist Rosita Moreno, whose Communist husband celebrates Trotsky's murder; Stalin's tragic wife Nadezhda Alliluyeva; and Trotsky's own partner Natalia.

Drawing heavily on Issac Deutscher's brilliant *Prophet* trilogy for its historical detail, the *Blue House* shows Trotsky beginning to question himself for the first time. Traumatized by the dual murders of the world revolution and his own children by the Stalinists, he appears vulnerable for the first time in his life. As this vulnerability becomes more apparent, so the novel builds to a climax no less shocking for its obviousness.

If I have one complaint about *Blue House*, it is that most of the characters seem to speak with much the same voice. You would expect, for instance, that Rosita Morena would think and write rather differently to Lavrenti Beria or Ramón Mercader.

When Delahunt does give a voice individuality, she does so wonderfully. The most enjoyable chapter, quite ironically, was the poet Mayakovsky's suicide note. Lenin wasn't noted for his sense of humour, but the description of the poet explaining to him at the Smolney Institute in Petrograd, days before the Revolution, why it was imperative that he paint Lenin's forehead with red paint, was quite surrealistically brilliant.

This is a book full of some of the millions of personal tragedies that the misery of Stalinism created. Whether it is the daily struggle for survival in 1930s Moscow, or the "Old Bolshevik" Adolf Joffe writing in his suicide note that "after 27 years in responsible Party posts, I have been forced into a situation where I have no alternative but to blow my brains out," the pain of the counter-revolutionary terror spares no one.

If I have any criticisms of this book they are minor ones. *In the Blue House* is an exceptional first novel which I would quite unreservedly recommend.

Apparently Meaghan Delahunt is at work on her next novel. If the first is anything to go by, it will certainly be something to look forward to. ■

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Mike Tait, Shomi Yoon

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# just what **are** your politics anyway?

**The more observant among you may have noticed that this magazine's politics aren't quite the same as the mainstream media's. So just where do we stand? Below are some of the basic political ideas behind our magazine.**

**Socialism** Capitalism is a system of crisis, exploitation and war in which production is for profit, not human need.

Although workers create society's wealth, they have no control over its production or distribution. A new society can only be built when workers collectively seize control of that wealth and create a new state in which they will make the decisions about the economy, social life and the environment.

**Workers' Power** Only the working class has the power to create a society free from exploitation, oppression and want.

Liberation can be won only through the struggles of workers themselves, organised independently of all other classes and fighting for real workers' power – a new kind of state based on democratically elected workers' councils.

China and Cuba, like the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, have nothing to do with socialism. They are repressive state capitalist regimes. We support the struggles of workers against every ruling class.

**Revolution Not Reformism** Despite the claims of Labour, Alliance and trade union leaders, the structures of the present parliament, army, police and judiciary cannot be taken over and used by the working class.

They grew up under capitalism and are designed to protect the ruling class against workers.

There is no parliamentary road to socialism.

**Internationalism** Workers in every country are exploited by capitalism, so the struggle for socialism is part of a worldwide struggle.

We oppose everything that divides workers of different countries. We oppose all immigration controls.

We campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries. We oppose imperialism and support all genuine national liberation struggles.

**Liberation From Oppression** We fight for democratic rights. We are opposed to the oppression of women, Māori, Pacific Islanders, gays and lesbians. These forms of oppression are used to divide the working class.

We support the right of all oppressed groups to organise for their own defence.

All these forms of liberation are essential to socialism and impossible without it.

**Tino Rangatiratanga** We support the struggle for tino rangatiratanga.

Māori capitalists and politicians have no interest in achieving tino rangatiratanga for working class Māori.

The Government and corporate warriors' approach to Treaty claims has benefited a Māori elite while doing little for working class Māori.

Tino rangatiratanga cannot be achieved within capitalism. It will only become a reality with the establishment of a workers' state and socialist society.

**Revolutionary Organisation** To achieve socialism, the most militant sections of the working class have to be organised into a revolutionary socialist party. Such a party can only be built by day to day activity in the mass organisations of the working class.

We have to prove in practice to other workers that reformist leaders and reformist ideas are opposed to their own interests.

We have to build a rank and file movement within the unions.

We are beginning to build such a party, linking the ideas of revolutionary socialism to workers' struggles against the system. If you agree with our ideas and want to fight for socialism, we urge you to join us.



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# Socialist Review

Britain's Labour landslide and the politics of Tony Blair: *Rogers' politics in Britain?* p.2  
What will socialism be like? p.11  
Fighting user-pays education *Issue 6 page 9*

Inside

Lies, greed and broken promises...

## Fight the Coalition now!

Why hasn't anything changed under MMP?  
See pages 8-9

# Socialist Review

Shipley's coup heralds new wave of attacks p.2  
sex and bombs: *Can Clinton survive?* p.5  
Activists' forum: There's still power in our unions p.6  
Stop them wrecking our Universities! back page

Inside

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An Shipley and her gang prepare for more cuts:

They say "Cutback..."  
We say Fightback!

Also in this issue: the real story of International Women's Day, 150 years since the Communist Manifesto, A brief history of democracy, Who was Che Guevara?, Film, TV & Music Reviews

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For a socialist and democratic alternative. Number Three Autumn 2000 \$1

After 15 Years of Market Madness...

## WE Sacked National - Now fight for REAL CHANGE

In our workplaces and unions, on the campuses, in the streets...

Inside:

- Can Labour and the Alliance bring real change? Brian Roper investigates. (p.4)
- What is the future for Green politics? John Ryan on Marxist conceptions of the environment. (p.6)
- Alex Callinicos on post-modernist intellectual fashions.
- Exploring women's liberation (p.9), fighting racism (p.20)
- Can We Try to Come Together? Gay rights today (p.16)

# Socialist Review of Aotearoa/New Zealand

For a socialist and democratic alternative. Issue 4 Spring 2000 \$1

## Where is NZ going?

'We take an in depth look at just Where is NZ going? p.3, plus A return to "Old" Labour? p.18 Big Money and the Mob p.13 and the need for Building a new Education Campaign p.14

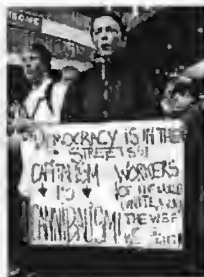
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We can make a difference!



On the barricades - Melbourne & Prague style! p.6, + Prague and the Web p.9

Also in this issue:

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waterfront dispute • timorangaitiranga • intellectual property • red words

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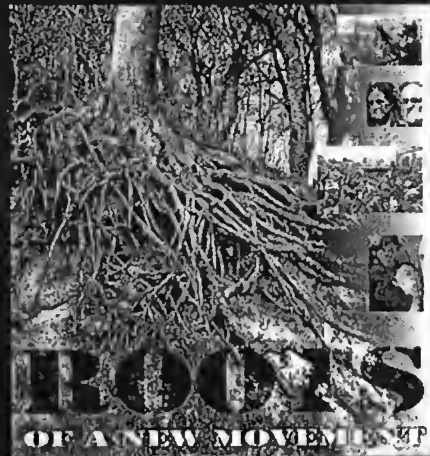
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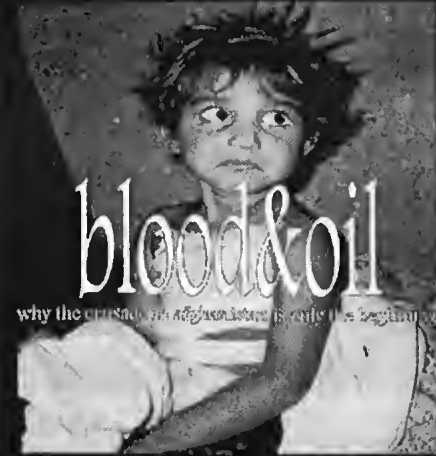


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